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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE:

BEING

LETTERS

FROM A

Young LADY in the Country,

TO

Her FRIEND in Town.

CONTAINING

A Series of the moſt intereſting Events, interſperſed with Moral Reflections; chiefly tending to prove, that the *Seeds* of VIRTUE are implanted in the Mind of EVERY Reaſonable Being.

LONDON:

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

LETTER I.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER a long journey that took up four days, I arrived laſt week at my aunt's, where, I ſuppoſe I am to ſtay a conſiderable time; in which I aſſure you my chief uneaſineſs will conſiſt in being ſeparated from you; and that you may depend upon it, will be great

enough o'conſcience. However, to paſs away ſome of my hours, which I foreſee will lie pretty heavy upon my hands, I will ſend you an account of all that happens worth your notice: but you muſt not be offended if I tell you, I write as much to amuſe myſelf as to pleaſe you; ſince this employment will not only be a recreation to me, but will flatter and ſooth my friendſhip, and, in ſome meaſure, compenſate for the want of your company. I ſhall always, while I am writing, think I am talking to you; and am even now delighted with the idea of that pleaſing intercourſe of minds we ſhall probably enjoy at this diſtance. How agreeable is the thought; that as often as you hear from me, you will learn every thing that paſſes in the ſoul of your friend, whilſt I in return ſhall meet with the ſame proof of an open undiſguiſed friendſhip from you! For my part, I intend to diſcover all the ſecret folds of my heart, and to unboſom myſelf to you without the leaſt reſerve, as I am perſuaded I ſhall never have any ſecrets which you have not a right to be acquainted with, and which I ſhall not be very ready to communicate. Pray do you follow my example; write with the ſame unreſerved freedom, and never diſguiſe thoſe little affairs in which your heart is concerned; for theſe things,

things, I think, my friendſhip gives me a peculiar right to know.

I AM now I don't know how many miles diſtant from dear London, the ſeat of your joys; and muſt not expect for a long time to ſee again the Mall, the play-houſe, or the drawing-room; but I begin to fancy, that in a month or two I ſhall be reconciled to gloomy ſhades, tall trees, and murmuring brooks, and all the ſylvan ſcenes which ſurround me; and even ceaſe to regret my diſtance from the genteel diverſions of the gay and polite world; for if plain and ſimple nature can ever appear agreeable, it muſt be here where ſhe ſhews herſelf in all her beauties. What a change have I already undergone! I ariſe at leaſt three or four hours ſooner than I ever did in my life before; and even go to bed long before midnight. Inſtead of the rattling of coaches, I now hear only the ruſling of leaves, or the warbling of birds; and inſtead of rich perfumes, my ſenſes are regaled with the milder fragrance of nature.

NAY, prithee, my dear, don't laugh at me: I am yet neither poet, nor lover, nor do I find that I am in the leaſt danger of being either of them. You, I know, cannot perceive any charms in ſuch a rude retreat, fit to engage the

attention of a fine lady. Here are no powdered beaus, or gilt equipages, none of the ſplendid allurements, with which ladies of your vivacity are apt to be captivated; but for my part, a natural tincture of gravity may poſſibly make me more eaſily ſupport the abſent of what your gayer diſpoſition may induce you to conſider as the very eſſence of happineſs.

My aunt I find is a lady of plain good ſenſe, and of a moſt free, eaſy and engaging behaviour; but as to her perſon, it is far from being agreeable; her face is of an immoderate length; her eye-brows large and very dark; and her noſe of a more than ordinary ſize; but notwithſtanding this, ſhe has an air of affability and good-nature ſpread over her countenance, which at the firſt view inſpires every one that ſees her with a pleaſing confidence. Her eaſy condeſcending goodneſs, her ſweetneſs, affability and complaiſant freedom, diffuſe over the minds of the meaneſt objects ſuch a ſelf-complacency, ſuch an unreſerved frankneſs of heart, as renders it impoſſible for them in her company to be ſtiffened by an uneaſy conſtraint. The loweſt being that bears the ſtamp of the human nature is an object of her regard. She puts herſelf upon a level with them in her converſation, and even uſes a language

different from her own, in order to ſuit her diſcourſe to their ideas, and to make them underſtand her advice, the conſolation ſhe offers them, and the friendly concern ſhe feels for their happineſs. As to her ſtature, it is ſomething above the ordinary height, though ſhe is a little awry; and, indeed, ſhe has nothing about her that ſpeaks the accompliſhed lady, though every body that ſees her muſt immediately think, (I ſhould rather ſay *feel*) her a very good one. In ſhort, ſhe is a woman of great prudence, and a perfect œconomiſt, and therefore her thoughts ſeem equally divided between the management of her own family, and a generous care for the welfare of thoſe who apply to her for aſſiſtance. The education of her children makes up a great part of her felicity; it is a delightful employment which ſhe knows how to render as agreeable to them as to herſelf. The young ladies have been accuſtomed from their infancy to ſhare with her in the delicate pleaſure of communicating happineſs, and have learnt from her, and an Engliſh Seneca, which they have almoſt by heart, the moſt engaging way of doing good. They have a ſmall ſalary at their own diſpoſal; and their good mother tells me, ſhe often feels her heart glow with a ſecret pleaſure at ſeeing them dry up the tears of the

diſtreſſed, with that money with which they had intended to purchaſe ſome faſhionable piece of vanity, or ſome ornamental trifle. The old gentleman, my uncle, who died about ſeven years ago, left her with four children, and a large eſtate, but very much incumbered with mortgages, which by her prudent management ſhe has lately paid off. And ſhe would now be very happy, had ſhe not a ſon, whoſe brutal extravagance and debaucheries render her extremely anxious for his welfare. This young man is about eighteen, of a robuſt conſtitution, pretty fat, and with a countenance perfectly expreſſive of the dulneſs and ſtupidity of his mind, which has been too rough to be poliſhed by a moſt free and liberal education; but as he is going to make the tour of Europe, I ſhall probably never have occaſion to mention him again. The eldeſt daughter I have not ſeen yet, ſhe being lately married to a gentleman at a conſiderable diſtance from hence. Amelia, her ſiſter, is a lady agreeable in her perſon, and happy in the poſſeſſion of a calm, yet ſedate mind; her paſſions ſeem to be regular, her thoughts juſt, her language unaffected, ſoft, and flowing. After this ſhort character, you cannot wonder that I no ſooner knew her, than I conceived a friendſhip for her, which I am perſuaded

perſuaded is now become reciprocal. Polly, the youngeſt daughter, is not quite ten years old; ſhe is a lovely little creature, of a moſt promiſing genius, and has ſuch an earneſt thirſt after knowledge, that her pretty queſtions frequently give me a very high ſatisfaction.

WITH theſe two young ladies, and ſome other agreeable companions, I ſpend great part of my time. The ſun is no ſooner riſen, than we take a walk, and taſte the freſhneſs of the morning air, in ſome of thoſe rural ſcenes which ſurround our houſe, while the innocent gaity of my new friends give an alacrity to my ſpirits, which is greatly heightened by the ſoftneſs of theſe early breezes, and the various ſcenes of natural beauty, which every way preſent themſelves to our view.

BUT it is time to conclude, ſince I have written enough for my firſt letter, and therefore ſhall only add, what your affection will, I am ſure, make you moſt ſollicitous to know; that is, that I am perfectly well, and have no other uneaſineſs than what ariſes from my diſtance from you. I am,

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

Your's moſt affectionately,

FELICIA.

LETTER II.

THE pleaſure, dear Madam, you expreſs at hearing from me, is ſuch a proof of your affection, that I cannot help taking notice of it. The endearments of a friend have ſomething ſo extremely charming in them, that it is impoſſible we ſhould be inſenſible of their value. If flattery eaſily inſinuates itſelf into our hearts, it is chiefly becauſe it ſooths our deſire of pleaſing; but how much ſweeter are the careſſes of a perſon on whoſe eſteem we found our happineſs, and whoſe ſatisfaction rebounds back, and gives us who confer it, a kind of ſelf-approbation. So much for preface.

Two or three days after I ſent you my letter, my couſin Amelia propoſed our taking an airing in the coach, the next morning as ſoon as it was light, which we accordingly put in practice: but we had not gone far before the ſtillneſs of the air, and the novelty of the proſpect to me, induced us to walk. A ſandy rock, out of which was cut huge caverns that ſeemed ready to fall, was on our left, and by a delightful contraſt, ſet off the ſpacious meadows and fields, which, on the right, extended to an inconceivable diſtance, where our ſight was only

only bounded by a clear ſky, that ſeemed to meet the ground, and in ſome places by hills, which could hardly be diſtinguiſhed from the gilded clouds in which they wrapped themſelves. Our eye at one view took in abundance of little villages, which ariſing from amidſt the trees at a great diſtance, agreeably diverſified this delightful landſcape *.

WHILST we walked on, diſcourſing on ſeveral agreeable ſubjects, I obſerved that the ſcene preſently changed, and the frightful precipices terminated in a high and ſteep hill, ſo full of tall trees and ſhrubs, that it formed a moſt delightful grove. The graſs here was mixed with beds of violets and primroſes, which diffuſed a charming fragrance through the air. Here we ſat down to refreſh ourſelves, on the banks of a ſmall fountain, which with a gentle murmur ran from a cavity under the hill, and after having drank ſome of the water out of a baſon which was chained to the ſide of it, we ſtruck into a narrow winding path, and began to mount the eminence to take in a larger view

* Leſt this deſcription ſhould be thought romantic, the editor thinks himſelf obliged to inform the public, that this and the reſt of the landſcapes, are actually ſituated near Nottingham; and that theſe ladies, he ſuppoſes, reſided in a village not far diſtant from that town.

of the vernal beauties of this delightful ſcene; when I obſerved a fine river *, which with ſerpentine meanders, added to the beauty of the whole. But while we were liſtening to the different warbling of a number of birds of various kinds, and obſerving the rabbets ſcudding along, and ſkipping at our approach into their burrows, we were interrupted from our contemplation of theſe trifling amuſements by a voice that at once ſeized and fixed our attention; for we were near enough to hear diſtinctly every word, though when we looked around us, we could diſcover no human object near. The unknown perſon ſeemed engaged in a contemplation of the harmony of nature, and with a ſoft, yet manly voice, ſpoke the following rhapſody.

" O NATURE! how beautiful, how lovely " are all thy works! with what pleaſure do " I gaze around, and view the vaſt profuſion " of wiſdom, and infinite ſkill that ſurrounds " me! ——— Bleſſed retreat! where every " object leads me to explore that bounteous " author of all goodneſs, who thus diſtributes " his favours to men, and thus teaches us to " concur with him in promoting the univerſal " good. While heaven, all communicative

* The river Trent.

heaven,

" heaven, thus profuſely ſhowers down its
" bleſſings, and imparts to us all that can
" charm our ſenſes, or raviſh our grateful
" minds with innocent delight, ſhall we with
" contracted hearts confine our pleaſures to the
" narrow limits of ſelfiſh paſſions, and not rather
" exert out utmoſt abilities in order to diſperſe
" a flood of joy, and render the beauteous, the
" harmonious ſcene complete?—But ah! how
" ſmall a ſhare can I contribute to the great
" deſign? Loſt in a manner amidſt the immenſi-
" ty of nature, like a ſingle flower amidſt the
" numberleſs number which enamel this ver-
" dant carpet, or a ſmall plant in this vernal
" landſcape, too minute ſingly to gain the
" attention, and which could not be miſſed
" out of the blooming ſcene!———But why
" do I complain? Am I not ſufficiently happy,
" if, amidſt the works of my creator, I can
" like them, by fulfilling the duties of my
" narrow ſphere, promote the general ſplendor
" and harmony of the whole. If the inanimate
" creation can beſtow ſuch pleaſures to a
" rational mind, how much nobler muſt be
" the ſatisfaction with which ſuperior beings
" view the beauteous order of the more noble,
" the intellectual world, when the paſſions
" and inclinations of the mind compoſe an

" harmonious ſcene, infinitely more lovely than " the fineſt and moſt elegant diſpoſitions of " matter?"

HERE the voice ſtopped: perhaps we were diſcovered through the trees, and the unknown perſon was diſpleaſed in being interrupted in his private reſvery. However, curioſity made us proceed; for I was very deſirous of knowing the ſtranger, whoſe ſentiments and language had prejudiced me very much in his favour.

I DO not know, my dear, what you will think of our adventure; but for my part I formed a moſt amiable idea of the perſon of this ſtranger, though I had never ſeen him; and his words made ſuch an impreſſion upon my heart, that I believe I have repeated every ſyllable; but the graceful manner, and the muſic of his voice, are what I can never give you the leaſt idea of; for upon my word they were quite inexpreſſible.

AMELIA endeavoured now to perſuade me to return, but I was too much charmed with what I had heard, to conſent to do it immediately. Prompted by a little female curioſity, I reſolved, if poſſible, to ſteal at leaſt one view of this ſtranger, which I did not doubt but I might eaſily do without being perceived. She laughed at my motive; but however,

however, at my entreaties, conſented to follow me. I then ſtruck into one of the winding paths which lay on the ſide from whence I heard the voice; but had not gone far, when looking back, I miſſed my companion. This at once alarmed me, and made me very uneaſy, both on her account and my own. ——— I ſtood ſtill ——— I liſtened ——— I returned back, ſtopping every moment to look around me; but juſt as I regained the place from whence I engaged her to accompany me in this fooliſh expedition, I heard a ruſling of the leaves at a ſmall diſtance, when my heart ſuddenly leaped with joy at the thought of having found again my friend: but I was quite miſtaken; for inſtead of her, a young man appeared from amidſt the boughs. He came to me with an air of reſpect. ——— But I ſhall forbear giving a deſcription of his perſon, till I can give you that of his mind, and that muſt not be till I know him better; which I hope will not be long. However, I muſt tell you, that I believe it was the ſame who had a few minutes before ſo agreeably engaged my attention. He no ſooner came up to me, than he obſerved the diſorder of my countenance, which in a moment was imprinted upon his, when making me a low bow, May I preſume

to

to aſk, Madam, ſaid he, with a trembling voice, and a moſt expreſſive look, what it is that diſcompoſes you? Are you alone? Yes, Sir, returned I, I have loſt my companion, a young lady, who, I imagine, is in equal pain to find me. Well, Madam, replied he, with an ingenuous look, might I hope that you would put yourſelf under the protection of a ſtranger, I would gladly offer my ſervice to wait upon you, till you rejoin the lady. Here he glanced his eyes upon me as if to anticipate my anſwer; but immediately caſt them down to the ground, and I think a ſigh eſcaped him.

THOUGH I was under no apprehenſion as to the behaviour of this young gentleman, yet I could not help heſitating a little to conſider what anſwer I ſhould make him. I was apprehenſive, that ſhould my couſin find me in his company, ſhe might think I avoided her with deſign; and this might poſſibly not only diſguſt her, but give her ſome thoughts to my prejudice. Beſides, in the opinion of the world, it might not be thought decent for me to be found ſo early, and in ſuch a retired place, with a man whom I had never ſeen before; to whoſe character I muſt confeſs myſelf an utter ſtranger. But theſe reflections would doubtleſs have given way to my inclinations, had not the

young

young gentleman, perceiving that I continued ſilent, reſumed: I ſee, Madam, you are afraid of truſting yourſelf with me; I cannot blame your caution, and will therefore leave you, in order to ſeek the lady whoſe abſence ſeems to give you ſome pain; and ſhall think myſelf very happy, if my endeavours ſhould reſtore your quiet. This is a very obliging propoſal, Sir, returned I; and I gladly take you at your word; mean while I will wait here to learn your ſucceſs: but I am aſhamed to give you this trouble. I have no other trouble, Madam, returned he, than in ſeparating myſelf from you. But I ought not to complain, ſince it is to ſerve you.

HERE he retired; but had not been gone long before I ſaw him return with precipitation, when he told me that he ſaw a lady walking down the hill, on which I permitted him to conduct me out of the wood, took my leave of him, and preſently rejoined her.

AMELIA was too angry with me to forbear reproaching me for the uneaſineſs I had given her, though ſhe expreſſed her reſentment in the moſt obliging terms; but was ſoon pacified when ſhe found it was done without deſign, and I had been equally troubled on her account. And indeed my uneaſineſs had been a ſufficient

puniſhment

puniſhment for my indiſcretion. ——— But I have troubled you too long with things of no conſequence, and will only add that we made haſte to our coach, and were drove home to breakfaſt.

PRAY give my reſpects where due, and do me the juſtice to think me,

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

The ſincereſt and

moſt affectionate of your Friends,

FELICIA.

LETTER III.

WELL, well, my dear, you may be as merry as you will with my romantic adventure, as you are pleaſed to call it. ——— I do not wonder at your laughing at me; for I had penetration enough to foreſee it; however, that could not prevent my giving you a faithful account of this extraordinary ramble; for I had rather you ſhould be a little merry at my expence, than I be ſuch a rebel to friendſhip, as to conceal any of my pleaſures or pains from you. But if what I related in my laſt may appear too trifling to deſerve your notice, I do not

not doubt but I ſhall ſoon attone for the trouble I have given you in reading it, by deſcribing ſcenes more intereſting.

THE perſon you are pleaſed, in the gaiety of your heart, to call ſome ſylvan deity, who you ſuppoſe inhabits the inchanting groves, the Arcadian ſcenes you ſay I have deſcribed, is a mere earthly being, as very a mortal as you or I; and the native beauties of this rural retreat, notwithſtanding what you are pleaſed to inſinuate to the contrary, are ſo far from being heightened by my deſcription, that were you with me, you would hardly think I had done them juſtice. But while you are attracted by the charms of your young admirer's dreſs and ſplendid equipage, and dazzled with the gaiety of a court, no wonder you think theſe humbler ſcenes, theſe innocent and ſimple charms which pleaſe me, are almoſt wholly fictitious, and little elſe but the invention of a luxuriant fancy, ——— a ſort of fairy-land that exiſts no where but in my own imagination.

I SAW the amiable youth I am now to deſcribe to you at church laſt ſunday. The moment I caſt my eyes upon him, I obſerved his fixed upon me; and to make an ingenuous confeſſion, I felt my heart inſtantly flutter with a very agreeable emotion. I had for ſeveral

days

days longed to ſee him, and could not now help feeling a ſecret joy, at finding my wiſhes granted. But I obſerved at the ſame time that he was in no danger of appearing ſingular by the regards he caſt upon me; for as I was the gayeſt lady in the whole aſſembly, every body, as ſoon as I aroſe up, inceſſantly gazed at me. When the ſervice was over, I grew impatient to know if he would ſpeak to me; I fancied he would, at leaſt I wiſhed it. I ſaw him wait at the door ——— I ſaw it with pleaſure, and went out with my aunt and couſins, filled with a formidable idea of his perfections. But how was I mortified, when after having addreſſed himſelf to my aunt and her daughters, and paid them ſome civil compliments, he took his leave, only making me a low bow, even without opening his lips to me.

COULD any thing, Madam, be more provoking than this behaviour? Not that I was in love with him (at leaſt I was reſolved not to think I was) ——— but to ſee him ſo inſenſible of my attractions? —— intollerable —— not to ſay one civil thing to me! ——— what ſtupidity! ——— if I had been ever ſo ugly, he could have done no more. ——— But however aukward this fit of reſentment may

appear

appear in me, eſpecially while I declare that I have my heart in my own poſſeſſion, yet I had in reality ſome reaſon for it. There is certainly a pleaſure in thinking ourſelves beloved by a man of ſenſe; and if I was not actually in love, I had a very great ambition of making him ſo. He would have been a moſt agreeable conqueſt, and I ſhould doubtleſs have thought his addreſſes a greater honour than thoſe of a thouſand coxcombs.

THE next day, however, I had the pleaſure of ſeeing him at my aunt's, and could not help flattering myſelf that I was the cauſe of his viſit. We had juſt dined, and Amelia, having taken up one of the volumes of the Spectator, was reading the affecting ſtory of Incle and Yarico, when he entered the parlour, and paying us ſome compliments, ſeated himſelf near the door, deſiring at the ſame time that he might not interrupt our entertainment. As my couſin had been uſed to treat him with all imaginable freedom, ſhe concluded her ſtory, and we entered upon a converſation on the nature of ingratitude; a ſubject that afforded the young gentleman a happy opportunity of diſcovering the delicacy of his ſentiments. He ſaid a thouſand things equally entertaining and inſtructive, and enlivened his diſcourſe with

abundance

abundance of tender, generous and manly thoughts: but at laſt my aunt being called out of the room, her daughters ſoon followed her. I was now in the moſt deſirable ſituation, and began to prepare myſelf for hearing a converſation infinitely more intereſting. But how great, how inconceivable was my ſurpriſe to find the perſon who a minute before entertained us with ſuch elegance of thought and expreſſion, inſtantly become ſpeechleſs. After fixing his eyes upon me for ſome time, he aroſe, and with an air that expreſſed a tender diffidence changed his ſeat, and ſat near me; but ſtill continued ſilent. His eyes, which had a remarkable languor, and a pleaſing ſoftneſs, were ſtill fixed upon me; but I no ſooner met his glances, than with a diſordered look he caſt them to the floor. I endeavoured in vain to reſume the converſation; he replied with ſuch a tender diffidence as would not ſuffer him to proceed. His words faltered on his lips, and were uttered with ſo much confuſion, that it was not difficult to obſerve the ſtruggle he had with his heart, and the pleaſing ſource of his embaraſſment.

AH! Madam, could I deſire a more agreeable triumph? You perhaps, had you been in my place, would have laughed heartily

at

at ſeeing him look ſilly; would have ridiculed this ſoftneſs of ſoul, and with your uſual ſprightlineſs have diverted yourſelf, at beholding a man ſo over-awed by your charms, as to give ſuch proofs of his weakneſs before you. And indeed can any thing more agreeably flatter our vanity, or give us a higher opinion of our own attractions, than to ſee them make a fool of good ſenſe, and ſtrike eloquence itſelf dumb? But alas! I found myſelf little diſpoſed to aſſume any ſuch airs of barbarous gaiety. I was not much leſs weak than he, and could not help pitying as well as blaming that modeſt diffidence which gave him ſuch pain; but this was a pity that was attended with a moſt exquiſite pleaſure; nor could I indeed have felt a greater at ſeeing him at my feet, had he even aſſumed the buſkin, and entertained me with all the lofty and melting language of a hero in tragedy. Not all the paſſionate rants of a lover, who would perſuade me to the folly of believing he was dying at my feet, and that his fate depended upon my ſmiles or frowns, could have given me half the proofs of a ſincere paſſion that I now received.

As I promiſed to give you ſome idea of his perfections, I will endeavour to do it now; his ſilence left me at full liberty to examine his perſon,

perſon, and I made uſe of this opportunity of doing it with the utmoſt freedom, and therefore without the leaſt flattery I ſhall give you his portrait as follows:

YOU muſt know then, that he is about twenty; and as to his ſtature, not much taller than I am: which, by the way, is much too ſhort for the hero of a romance, who ought at leaſt to be ſix feet high. His complexion is lively; his eyes blue and ſparkling, and ſo very expreſſive, that they ſeem to diſcover in the ſtrongeſt manner all the ſenſations of his heart. A heart that I believe would be a great looſer, had it not ſo true an interpreter to render all its emotions viſible; ſince in his open countenance is painted an ingenuous honeſty; the moſt lively traces of all that is humane, friendly and benevolent, mixed with an engaging modeſty and ſimplicity of manners. His hair (for he is ſo unpolite as not to wear a wig) is of a dark brunette, and hangs in natural curls, which juſt touch his ſhoulders. As to his thoughts, they ſeem bent on the improvement of his mind; and the love of truth and virtue (antiquated perfections!) are ſo deeply impreſſed there, that he ſeems to have very little idea of thoſe fancied charms, thoſe faſhionable accompliſhments, which are

neceſſary to form the character of the fine gentleman. Nay, the aukward creature does not appear to have the leaſt notion of the art of handling a ſnuff-box with a grace; does not even know how to murder the reputation of thoſe who are abſent, or flatter thoſe that are preſent. And though he ſeems very aſſiduous to pleaſe me, he has not, I can tell you, had the complaiſance to let me know that he thinks I have more charms than his old grandmother.

You have now, my dear Charlotte, a right to form what judgment you pleaſe upon the picture I have drawn. The modeſt ruſticity of my ſpark, ſo very different from the confident addreſſes of the town beaux, muſt make him ſeem a very odd ſort of a creature to you, who are ſo uſed to hear yourſelf praiſed in lofty ſtrains, that you will perhaps be ſurpriſed that there ſhould be any other way of touching the heart. But for my part, however ridiculous his behaviour may appear to you, I cannot help telling you, that I found myſelf exceedingly moved with that tender diffidence, and melting confuſion, which, in ſpight of himſelf, diſcovered what I am perſuaded he would very gladly have concealed. His ſilence itſelf, added to the ſeveral tender emotions I obſerved in his countenance,

countenance, made ſome ſtrange advances in my heart; and to be ſincere, I do not know what may be the effect of two or three more ſuch tender interviews.

AFTER this frank confeſſion, I know you are more inclined to laugh at me, than at him. ——— Do ſo if you pleaſe ——— I ſhall find an opportunity of laughing at you in my turn. ——— But to proceed; my aunt at laſt rejoined us after an hour's abſence, in which time I had not one gallant thing ſaid to me, not a ſyllable that could tell me he was my lover: every declaration of this kind was perfectly involuntary; nor do I know when he will have reſolution enough to unburthen his heart to me. But however merry you may make yourſelf at this letter, I dare ſay you will be pleaſed with the confidence I repoſe in you, and with the freſh aſſurances I make you of being,

DEAR MADAM,

Your moſt ſincere

and affectionate Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I DON'T think there is any occaſion to make an apology for ſending you this ſo ſoon after my laſt, though I have not yet received an anſwer to it. I know you are always glad to hear from me, and therefore without ceremony I follow the dictates of my heart, which lead me to communicate every thing to you, that I have reaſon to flatter myſelf will be an agreeable amuſement.

A FEW days ago my aunt having engaged to ſpend a day or two with an elderly gentleman and lady, who live at a village a few miles diſtant from our houſe, they made me one of the party, and we accordingly ſet out in the coach as ſoon as we had drank tea. The old gentleman who expected us, met us with his pipe in his mouth, and in an agreeable friendly manner, paid us the compliments of his houſe before we arrived at it; and then conducted us home, ſmoaking all the way at the coach door. As ſoon as we entered his houſe, the unreſerved behaviour of theſe old people rendered their company very diverting. The old 'ſquire enlivened the converſation with

abundance of merry ſtories, which his humourous and pleaſant manner rendered vaſtly diverting. But the worſt part of our entertainment conſiſted in our being obliged to bear with the impertinence of an old maiden lady the gentleman's ſiſter, who out of an affectation of extraordinary piety and prudence, joined to an aukward air of over-ſtrained modeſty, aſſumed an authority that made her perfectly ridiculous. You never in all your life, I dare ſay, beheld ſo complete a prude. She would inſinuate that there was a double meaning in the moſt innocent expreſſions, and would frequently ſet us upon ſearching for an indecent thought, where, I dare ſay, none but herſelf ever had any. This was the cenſor of the company, from whom our facetious friend often met with a ſharp reprimand. Fie, fie, would ſhe frequently cry, interrupting him, toſſing up her head, and giving him a look of ſupercilious diſdain, I proteſt you make me bluſh. This is quite intollerable. And the next minute ſhe would add, Faugh! I vow I cannot bear to hear your beaſtly ſmut. Really you will oblige me to leave the room. But the beſt of it was, that this gentleman's obſcenity was like ſome people's wit, with this difference only, that as no body can ſee

that

that but themſelves, ſo none of the company could find him guilty of a want of decency, but this experienced maid. Beſides, her comments were a hundred times worſe than the text. She muſt certainly have a moſt fruitful invention, as well as a very unchaſte caſt of mind, or elſe, I think it hardly poſſible that ſhe ſhould be ſo very intelligent in things, which it is the greateſt glory of ladies in our circumſtances not to underſtand. Modeſty is the diſtinguiſhing virtue of our ſex; nor can a gentleman violate it in our preſence, without being guilty of an unpardonable rudeneſs; but this virtue will never teach us to torture words and ſyllables to make them ſpeak a ſenſe which the ſpeaker had not the leaſt idea of. This would be to act entirely inconſiſtent with that love of decency we make pretenſions to.

BUT to return to our prude. You would have laughed to hear her (while with an air of the moſt ridiculous affectation ſhe drew up her mouth) expreſs her averſion for the naſty filthy creatures, the men. She is ſurpriſed that our ſex can be ſo imprudent as to marry. And though ſhe has had the greateſt and moſt advantageous offers, (which, by the way, her ſmall remains of beauty and ſenſe would not tempt one to believe) ſhe could never be

prevailed upon ſo much as to think with patience on the naſty odious things.

SEVERE as this lady was upon the old gentleman, he was not much behind her in his replies, in which he rallied her ſo agreeably, that I could almoſt forgive her impertinenee on account of the pleaſant remarks it occaſioned.

As ſoon as dinner was over, ſhe began with a ſevere cenſure upon the weakneſs and depravity of human nature, which opened the way for abundance of devout ſcandal and pious defamation. And as this gave her a happy occaſion of mentioning, by way of illuſtration, the real or imaginary vices of her neighbourhood, ſhe ſeemed to talk on this ſubject with an unuſual ſatisfaction. Her immaculate ſoul triumphed over the crimes of the multitude, and made her look down upon them with a ſacred indignation. Every foible was repreſented in the moſt glaring light, and a reaſon given for all the accidents which had happened within her notice. Elated with the moſt pompous ideas of her own ſpotleſs virtue, ſhe pretended to know, why one was thrown from his horſe, why another was robbed, or another dangerouſly ill of a fever, and pointed out the reſpective crimes which were the cauſe

of

of each diſaſter; while her misfortunes, on the contrary, were only the trials of an indulgent providence. What an admirable artifice to extinguiſh the generous impreſſions of humanity, and to render the heart inſenſible to pity! to blot out all the traces of the deity, and ſtamp the brute on the reaſonable ſoul! But what, if poſſible, added to the cruelty and inhumanity of her ſlanders was, her indirect inſinuations, artfully mixed with a pretended air of friendſhip, which were a greater inſult on thoſe ſhe aſperſed, than her more open invectives. Alas! cried ſhe with a ſigh, who would think that my dear friend —— I won't mention her name —— my regard for her will not ſuffer me to do that —— but ſhe does not live many doors from us—— I ſay, who would think that ſo fine a lady, with ſuch a modeſt and artleſs look, was not as perfect in her virtue, as ſhe is in the ſymmetry of her perſon. But I am glad ſhe has kept her folly to herſelf; and indeed am too much her friend ever to divulge it. I have heard, indeed, a little whiſper —— but no matter what they ſay of her: I hope it only proceeds from malice and ill-nature.——O fie! how can people ſlander one another at

this rate; to be ſure it is very wicked of them. ——

YES, doubtleſs, Madam, replied the old gentleman, interrupting her with a ſneer; we know you are very ſenſible of the malignity of this crime. Here he winked at my aunt, ſhrugged up his ſhoulders, and ſhe proceeded. — Yes, heaven knows ſlander is my averſion, reſumed ſhe, and I would not for the world be guilty of it. What if ſhe is not ſo ſlender as ſhe uſed to be; ſhe may be troubled with the dropſy, you know. —— I love to put the beſt conſtruction upon every thing.

SLENDER! Madam, replied our old friend, ſmiling with an air of indignation; I ſaw that lady yeſterday, and upon my word I never beheld a finer ſhape, or a more eaſy air—— I could not help taking particular notice of her. How! Sir, cried ſhe, with a look that expreſſed her diſappointment and confuſion, I am perſuaded you don't know who I mean. Yes, Madam, I do, returned he; and between you and I, however you conceal names, you are always ſure to point your invectives in ſuch a manner, that nobody can miſtake the perſon they are levelled at. This ſhow of friendſhip is only a pretence, a ſpecious artifice to wound the deeper. Don't you think, ladies, continued

he

he turning to us, that my ſiſter with her white unſullied virtue muſt appear to great advantage, while ſhe is ſurrounded by ſuch a black neighbourhood. How beautiful muſt a ſwan look in the midſt of a flock of ravens!

SHE was now as red as fire, and was doubtleſs going to make a ſevere reply, when to my no ſmall ſatisfaction, the converſation was diverted by a gentleman's entering the room, with a young lady of genteel appearance, and a perſon formed to prepoſſeſs every one in her favour. Our good-natured prude ſeemed a little confounded at their preſence; but ſoon recovering herſelf, ran to embrace the lady, with ſuch an appearance of ſincerity, that I began to think her more capable of friendſhip than I had before imagined; but while ſhe was laviſhing upon this ſtranger the moſt ardent careſſes, and with an exceſs of complaiſance, thanking her for her viſit, my aunt told me, that this was the lady ſhe had a minute before ſo cruelly aſperſed under the character of a friend.

ALL this while I had not taken notice of the gentleman who was brother to this injured lady; but when he came up to us, I was ſeized with a ſudden flow of joy at ſeeing him the amiable youth I deſcribed to you in

my laſt. But you can't imagine what an effect this diſcovery had upon me: the moment I caſt my eyes upon his ſiſter, and conſidered her as a lady vilely ſlandered by the perſon who was now embracing her, I could not, at firſt, forbear taking her part againſt the prude, and being highly offended at her hypocriſy; but now when I conſidered her as the ſiſter of this engaging youth, for whom I felt ſome of the moſt tender ſentiments, I could not help regarding her as a monſter, and entering into the injured lady's ſufferings, with a very different kind of indignation. The affront was become much nearer and more ſenſible than it was before. And indeed, nothing but my regard for peace could have prevented my cautioning her, whom I now conſidered as my friend, againſt one who could ſtab with a ſmile, and ſting the perſon ſhe hugged to her boſom. Lucius, for that is the young gentleman's name, ſaluted my aunt and couſins with an air the moſt free and engaging; but when he came to me, methought a timorous confuſion rendered his compliments hardly intelligible. However, he took a chair, when the old 'ſquire with his uſual freedom cried out, at the ſame time taking him by the hand, Well, my young philoſopher, I am heartily glad to ſee you.

Here

Here is a lady in company has been degrading human nature moſt unmercifully; and has even aſſerted that we have all a natural propenſity to commit the blackeſt crimes. Ods my life, if I had been able to have managed an argument againſt her on ſuch a difficult ſubject, I ſhould have thought myſelf obliged to vindicate the honour of my own ſpecies; but now you are here, you muſt e'en do it for me. I am not willing to think myſelf a villain, nor would I maintain ſuch an ill opinion of my friends ——— But have you reſolution enough, my boy, to vindicate your own ſentiments when they oppoſe thoſe of the ladies?

YES, Sir, returned he ſmiling, when their honour is to be ſupported; but I hope there are none here, that have really ſuch unworthy thoughts of themſelves and us. For my part, continued he, with an air perfectly graceful, I think there can't be a greater reflection on the author of nature, on his wiſdom and goodneſs, on his ſpotleſs purity, than this opinion, which at once renders man an object of deteſtation and abhorrence, and his creator unworthy the title of the father of his rational creation: a title which reflects a glory upon our ſpecies, and which ſprings from the moſt

reſplendent as well as endearing attribute of the deity.

IF we impartially ſurvey the firſt impreſſions of nature, and the origin of our paſſions, we ſhall find that all thoſe propenſities which are not acquired, are on the ſide of virtue. The mind of the infant no ſooner begins to open and expand, than he feels the dawn of reaſon: the bright radiant ſtream of heavenly light pours into his ſoul, and he ſees at once the natural deformity of ſome actions, and the native charms and intrinſic lovelineſs of others. But even before reaſon can take place, and while this reſplendent ray of the deity is too glimmering to direct him in the paths of truth and virtue, he feels within him an internal and moral ſenſe, which diſtinguiſhes between virtue and vice, beauty and deformity, harmony and diſcord. He is delighted with ſtriking colours; he is charmed with the melting warbling of a well-touched inſtrument; he is terrified with the braying of an aſs, a ſhriek, or a clap of thunder. But whence can ariſe theſe various ſenſations of pleaſure, or of pain? Whence can ſpring theſe early ideas of harmony, proportion, and beauty, if they are not founded in the conſtitution of nature, if there is not an internal ſenſe, a natural taſte by which they

are

are qualified to diſcern them? Virtue is the muſic of the ſoul, the harmony of the paſſions; it is the order, the ſymmetry, the interior beauty of the mind; the ſource of the trueſt pleaſures, the fountain of the ſublimeſt and moſt perfect happineſs. But let us have recourſe to nature, and ſee if this is not the caſe. How early does the little creature feel ſentiments of gratitude in return for the tender care of its nurſe! How early is it intendered by the ſocial affections of pity and compaſſion! And how pleaſingly does every natural guſh of ſoft affection ſwell its breaſt and pour from it's pretty eyes! —— But why does it experience theſe tender feelings of the ſoul? For what reaſon does the untaught mind ſtart back from ſpectacles of violence and horror? Why is it moved with pity? Why is it ſhocked and wounded? Why does it bleed at miſeries in which itſelf has no immediate concern? Is it not becauſe it is naturally virtuous, naturally compaſſionate and ſympathizing?

WHAT a delightful repreſentation, cried Amelia with an expreſſive ſmile, have you given us of human nature! How very different from thoſe gloomy diſcourſes we daily hear of the wretchedneſs and deformity of all the race of Adam! Too many of our clergy ſeem to

take a peculiar pleaſure in degrading mankind, as if they thought there was no other way of exalting the deity, than by debaſing his offspring: and this they do by repreſenting us as born in guilt, and naturally incapable of performing the leaſt action either virtuous in itſelf, or acceptable to our maker. It is very true, replied my aunt; but in my opinion nothing can be more injurious to the cauſe of virtue, than ſuch falſe repreſentations. For my part, as I have carefully attended to the actions and behaviour of children, in their moſt early infancy, I can ſay from experience, that I have never beheld the leaſt traces of this natural turpitude which is the ſubject of ſo many pompous harangues; but as I can't be ſuppoſed to have carried my reflections of this kind ſo far as Lucius, who I find has made this ſubject his ſtudy, I ſhall deſire him to run through the moſt particular of thoſe vices, which are ſuppoſed to lurk in our hearts, in order to ſhew that they have no real exiſtence in the conſtitution of our nature. But what you have ſaid, Sir, added ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to Lucius, brings to my mind a circumſtance, which may further illuſtrate your opinion of the moral ſenſe, and prove by a familiar inſtance, that it is really founded in nature, and not merely a plauſible repreſentation

repreſentation of what we only wiſh to be true. But not to keep you any longer in ſuſpenſe: ſome years ago as I was at work in my parlour next the hall, I was alarmed at hearing ſome body fall down ſtairs, and my daughter Polly giving a ſhriek at the ſame time, I ran in a terrible fright to aſſiſt my child. But with what ſurpriſe was I ſeized to ſee, inſtead of her, a young man whom I had entertained the day before lying upon the floor, who aroſe the moment I entered the hall. The dear little creature, who had been the inſtant before at play, ſtood ſpeechleſs; ſhe was ſtruck with compaſſion; her lips were pale, her cheeks were wet with tears, her joints trembled. I preſſed her to tell me what was the matter, but could obtain no other anſwer than, *The man! the man!* In ſhort, her whole ſoul was in ſuch an agony, that it was a long time before I brought her to herſelf *. This ſtory I aſſure you

* THOUGH this ſtory, however well atteſted, may appear very trifling to the inconſiderate part of mankind, yet it is really of conſequence, ſince it ſeems at leaſt to prove that the doctrine of the moral ſenſe, has its foundation not in wild chimeras, but in nature itſelf. Some very ingenious gentlemen have endeavoured to prove, that the emotion we feel at ſeeing a miſerable object, has its riſe from ſelf-love; and proceeds only from our being ſuddenly led to place ourſelves

you is fact, and I would desire this lady, if she can, to account for this tender flow of benevolence and compassion in a child of three years old: an age in which she herself must allow, that reason could have no share in the emotions of her heart.

REALLY, Madam, replied the religious prude, in a peevish tone, I am astonished to hear you. I thought you had been more orthodox than to assert such strange opinions. I am sorry to see that your fondness for your child has such an unhappy effect, as to shut your eyes against the truths of our religion. I will *warrant* you now you don't believe original sin.——Don't we see every where

ourselves in the circumstances of the distressed person. But can it be supposed, that a child, who has hardly any other ideas than those presented by its senses, at an age when the little creature is incapable of expressing its thoughts in words, and when it can lisp out but a few of its perceptions; can it be supposed, I say, that a child in these circumstances, can be thus capable of transferring itself, in idea, into the condition of another, and then drawing consequences from this act of the mind? This is very unlike their way of reasoning in all other cases.----But after all, the story itself may be regarded as a fiction, though I am assured it is not; however, if any one will take the pains carefully to examine the behaviour of children on such occasions, they will find reason enough from their own experience to confirm the above argument. *The* EDITOR.

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the perverſeneſs of children? But to be ſure you won't ſee it——— you don't know that they are given to lying, pride, and every vice they are capable of committing. One would think that experience alone would be ſufficient to let us ſee that they are naturally wicked. Alas! continued ſhe with a ridiculous whine, and at the ſame time ſhaking her head, theſe are proud thoughts; it is but too true, that our nature is ſadly depraved, and that we are naturally inclined to all manner of debauchery.

You muſt permit me, Madam, to diſſent from your opinion, replied the engaging Lucius with a ſmile, and I think I am able to prove that nature, who has ſo early prejudiced the ſoul on the ſide of virtue, has not thrown in amongſt her favours any of thoſe baleful ingredients you mention. We receive nothing from the hands of the ſupreme being which is not like himſelf, perfectly good.——Nothing that he might not communicate conſiſtent with his infinite benevolence; and therefore all I can grant is, that this moral ſenſe, like the light of reaſon, is not in every one *equally* ſtrong, refined and delicate, though it is in all capable of directing to the purſuit of what is amiable and praiſe-worthy. As to the perverſeneſs of children, their lying, pride, and whatever elſe

you

you are pleaſed to lay to their charge, they are eaſily accounted for. They have not only ill examples, but are taught to be vicious. Pains are taken to make them ſo; and the fond mother without deſign, acts as if ſhe laboured to eraſe out of its mind the pure impreſſions of nature *. But I ſhall leave this ſubject, and endeavour

* THE judicious Mr. Locke conſiders this ſubject in a very particular manner. "If we look into the common "management of children, ſays he, we ſhall have reaſon to "wonder, that there are any footſteps of virtue left in the "world. What vice can be named which parents do not ſeaſon "them with, and drop into them the ſeeds of, as ſoon as they "are capable to receive them? I don't mean by the "examples they give, which is encouragement enough; "but that which I would take notice of here, is, the "downright TEACHING them vice.----*Give me a blow "and I will beat him*, is a leſſon which moſt children every "day hear;" this naturally fixes in their minds principles of revenge.---- "They are taught to be proud of their "cloaths long before they put them on," and to treat with contempt and inſolence all who are not ſo well dreſſed as they: by which they render their hearts obdurate, and root out their natural ſentiments of pity. "Lying and "equivocations are put into the mouths of young people, "and commended in children, whilſt they are for their "parent's advantage." Their minds are enervated by flattery, and luxury of every kind. "Is my young maſter "a little out of order, the queſtion is, *What will my dear "eat? What ſhall I get for thee?* Every body's invention "is ſet on work to find out ſomething luſcious and delicate

"enough

endeavour to prove that the ſeveral vices laid to our charge have not their ſource from nature.

AVARICE, with all its black attendants, is confeſſedly a crime of old age, and ſeldom arrives at maturity till accompanied with grey hairs. Nor can it have the leaſt foundation in the conſtitution of our frame, ſince it can only be completed by time, and a conſtant war with ourſelves. Every object of real miſery, every inſtance of virtue in diſtreſs, demands our relief with ſuch a forcible eloquence, that we are obliged to ſtruggle with ourſelves in order to ſuppreſs our riſing compaſſion. The natural

" enough to prevail over that want of appetite, which nature " has wiſely ordered in the beginning of diſtempers to " prevent their increaſe.----He had the will of his maid " before he could ſpeak or go; he had the maſtery of his " parents ever ſince he could prattle; and why now he " is grown up, and is ſtronger and wiſer than he was then, " muſt he be reſtrained and curbed?----If his deſires " carry him to wine and women, they are objects as ſuitable " to the longing of one of more years, as what he cried for " when little, were to the inclinations of a child." See *Locke on Education, page* 34---46. But innumerable are the methods of inſtilling vice into the flexible mind of the infant. Their rewards render them incorrigibly obſtinate, their puniſhments make impreſſions never to be eraſed. The *bobgobkin* is ever after a ſubject of terror, and the *poor unhappy wretch*, who was *to take them away when they were naughty*, has fixed deeply a contempt and averſion for objects of miſery and diſtreſs. *The* EDITOR.

feelings

ſeelings of the heart, which on theſe occaſions prompt every man to pity, can't be eraſed without a degree of ſelf-denial; a violence to reaſon; a violence to all the remains of humanity.

As to lewdneſs, nature muſt utterly diſclaim it.——What man that has the leaſt remains of generoſity, the leaſt ſenſe of pity, would not ſhudder at the thought of betraying the lovely innocent to guilt, and ſhame, and infamy? What man, that has not loſt all the ſenſe and underſtanding of a man, all the ſoft and noble impreſſions of humanity, and who was one ſtep above a brute, would heſitate for a moment whether he ſhould bridle or indulge an inclination, when the dreadful conſequence lies ſo plainly before him——where miſery, inevitable miſery, muſt attend the partner of his pleaſures?

But this is not all; we have not only a moral ſenſe, but a paſſion adapted to reſtrain our deſires, and reduce them within proper bounds: a paſſion ſuited to ſoften and reform our minds, by inſpiring the tendereſt, moſt noble and delicate ſentiments. Here, giving me a look, he coloured, and at the ſame time ſuffered a ſigh to eſcape him; but immediately endeavouring to recover himſelf from his confuſion,

confuſion, which he ſtrove in vain to conceal, he reſumed———but the force of love almoſt every one has experienced. ——— Ay, ay, cried the old gentleman laughing; and I don't queſtion but every one here has felt its power. For my part, when I was a young man, I was a perfect enamorato. Was you ſo? cried the old maid, therefore becauſe you were ſuch a fool, you muſt think, to be ſure, that I have been ſo too. No, Sir, I aſſure you I was never guilty of that weakneſs. If love, Madam, is a weakneſs, replied Lucius with ſome warmth, it is at leaſt the nobleſt weakneſs we are liable to. Love refines and humanizes the mind, gives a delicacy to our conceptions, and renders us incapable of injuring, even in thought, the dear object of our ſoft affections. And, in fine, is a noble counterpoiſe to thoſe deſires which providence has wiſely given us, as it is directly calculated to prevent their carrying us beyond the bounds of reaſon and virtue. So the pleaſing ties of friendſhip, mutual affection and public-ſpiritedneſs, whoſe charms are almoſt univerſally felt, are an additional guard againſt our degenerating into baſe, mercenary, and ſelfiſh animals.

BUT as we have all theſe ſtrong incitements to virtue, it may be aſked, Why there is ſuch

a great degree of vice in the world? I anſwer, that it is owing to education; the continual temptation of preſent and ſenſible objects, and the powerful force of example. Theſe ſuſpend the generous and kindly impreſſions of humanity, petrify the tender heart, and make us ſhut our eyes and ears to pity.

HERE our old friend, who for ſome time ſeemed loſt in the pleaſure this converſation had given him, finding Lucius had done, aroſe up in a kind of extaſy, when holding his pipe in his hand, he cried out in a theatrical tone:

We are by nature virtuous, by nature ſoft and humane,
'Till ſelfiſh paſſions chill our young affections,
And freeze the tender heart to icy hardneſs:
No more diſtreſſed virtue ſwells our breaſts;
No more we melt at others wants, and feel
Thoſe foreign cares with painful friendly ſmart
And ſoft compaſſion. The inward ſtruggle o'er,
The conqueſt gain'd by the dire fury, vice,
With Meducæan power we're chang'd to ſtone,
To lifeleſs, ſenſeleſs ſtone. ———

HERE, in the height of his rhapſody, he ſtruck his pipe againſt the table, with a violence that

that made it fly into twenty pieces. The oddneſs of this whimſical behaviour made us immediately burſt out a laughing, and in a moment diſperſed that thoughtful air that our long attention to this grave diſcourſe had ſpread over our faces.

I DON'T know, my dear Charlotte, what idea this converſation will give you of this amiable youth; nor can I tell how you will like his ſentiments: but this I am ſure of, that you are very much obliged to me for being at all this pains in tranſcribing, what perhaps only my eſteem for the ſpeaker made me fancy ſomething curious; tho' you perhaps may think it hardly worth your notice. You imagine now that I have got a very extraordinary memory; but to be ſincere, I have done little more than tranſcribe what my aunt prevailed upon Lucius to give her afterwards in writing upon the ſubject; which he might eaſily recollect as he was the chief ſpeaker, and the ſentiments entirely his own.

BUT all this while I had no opportunity of a moment's ſeparate converſation with this engaging young gentleman: my heart longed to be entertained with a more intereſting ſubject; a ſubject that would have been infinitely more delightful to me, than the moſt refined

ſpeculations,

ſpeculations, though accompanied with all the charms of eloquence, all the ſtriking graces which attended his manner of expreſſing himſelf. And I freely confeſs that I could not help thinking him a little tedious, though my reaſon aſſented to every thing he ſaid. But when he had done, the applauſe that was given him by almoſt all the company, ſo agreeably flattered my eſteem, or if you inſiſt upon it, I will ſay my *love*, that I never experienced half the delight it gave me, when in my vaineſt moments I have liſtened to the flattering praiſes of my admirers. But it is time to conclude this long letter, and therefore I ſhall only add, that I am,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

HOW inimitably pretty is your way of raillery! I could not read your letter without breaking off at leaſt half a dozen times to laugh at your whimſical conceits. But however, you are never likely to ſee my ſpark

in lawn ſleeves, though you ſay there needs little more than for him to mount the roſtrum to obtain them.——What a groteſque figure have you drawn of a gaping congregation liſtening to his voice, while the ſoul of muſic dwells upon his tongue, and all the ladies, charmed with his ſtriking accents, ſurrender up their hearts, as I do, to the inchanting force of pleaſing ſounds, and graceful action. Was that the caſe, I am of your mind, that amidſt ſuch a number of competitors, I might ſtrive in vain to charm him; and therefore was there any danger of his entering into holy orders, I ſhould certainly uſe all the influence I have over him to prevent a ſtep that you ſay would be ſo dreadfully fatal to my own repoſe. But raillery apart, I will now return to my ſtory.

In the evening we left our merry hoſpitable friend, and returned home without Lucius's having an opportunity of ſaying one tender thing to me; but his eyes, however, were leſs reſerved, and methought entertained me with a language that I could eaſily underſtand. Ah! how much I love, cried they, with a ſoft timidity; at leaſt I fancied ſo: whilſt an artleſs, ſparkling glance of mine, in ſpite of myſelf, replied, how much am I pleaſed that you ſhould

do

do ſo. I know you can't keep your countenance at this mute kind of diſcourſe; but really I am perſuaded that it was very intelligible to us both, though it was ſo precipitate that nobody in the room could take notice of it. Why ſhould we diſguiſe our hearts, and teach our looks a reſerve that we are far from feeling? Theſe little arts ſhould never be uſed to a man of ſenſe, and merit; as for the reſt, we ought to have no care about them. Nor indeed need I bluſh to own, that this ſilent intercourſe of ſouls gave me more pleaſure than I ever received from any of my conqueſts. There is ſomething noble in charming a youth of ſuch exalted perfections, and however inſenſible we may be when attacked by the impertinence of a fop, or a coxcomb, it would prove a want of the moſt laudable ambition not to be elated here, where fine ſenſe, virtue, and an agreeable perſon, are ſo charmingly united.

As ſoon as we were ſeated in the coach, my aunt and couſins began to be very merry with the ridiculous character of the prude, when at laſt obſerving that I forbore joining in their converſation, Amelia tapped me haſtily on the ſhoulder, What is the matter? cried ſhe with a pretty innocent giggle at ſeeing me ſtart; one would be almoſt tempted to think

you

you in love. Come, rouſe yourſelf out of this revery, and let us enjoy the benefit of your company. How do you like Lucius? Like him! replied I with a bluſh; why, I don't know; pretty well. She is thinking perhaps of her friends in town, cried my aunt; or is it really this gentleman that employs your thoughts? added ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to me; Lucius is a very deſerving man, and had he an eſtate any way equal to his merit, I could not wiſh you a greater happineſs than to have him for a huſband. I was not thinking of a huſband, Madam, replied I, with as unconcerned an air as poſſible; but has he only a ſmall fortune then? Pray what is his family? I ſuppoſe you can give me a particular account of it? This was ſpoke with an aching heart oppreſſed with fears; for I could not help being alarmed at the very thought of a diſparity of circumſtances; for though we may have ever ſo little ambition ourſelves, our friends have always a great deal for us, and perhaps are apt to carry it a little too far. They do not think as we do, and are almoſt always blind to merit, when unattended with riches: for as they ſincerely wiſh us every bleſſing, they cannot bear to think of our wanting ſo eſſential a one as that on which depends, in a great meaſure,

the reputation, the eaſe, the honours of life: the moſt conſpicuous and dazling advantages!

MY aunt without any heſitation replied, My dear, you are in the right; I have been perfectly acquainted with Lucius's family for many years, and am very able to give you their hiſtory. His father was born to a ſmall eſtate; but what made this a real misfortune was, the very means which reduced his patrimony, gave him diſpoſitions which rendered it the more difficult to ſupport himſelf in the narrow bounds that were allotted him. He was educated amidſt a round of pleaſure; he ſaw nothing but luxury and extravagance from his moſt early infancy. He imbibed the ſame deſires which had almoſt been the ruin of his father, and which has ſince had the ſame effect with reſpect to his own family. When he was between twenty and thirty, he paid his addreſſes to a young lady, who, beſides a conſiderable fortune and much beauty, had a ſweetneſs of ſoul, which gave a luſtre to every other perfection. This was ſpread over her countenance, and appeared perfectly conſpicuous in every look and every action. In ſhort, he ſoon gained her affections, and with the conſent of her friends married her. Poor woman! how much do I pity her! He no ſooner got her fortune in

his own hands; but in ſpite of his good ſenſe (for this muſt be allowed him) he reſumed thoſe expenſive diverſions which he had before been obliged to lay aſide, for want of the means of ſupporting them. The pleaſures of the bottle, horſe-races, and gaming, have ever ſince taken up all his time; while his poor lady is treated with a barbarous contempt and inſolence; a cruel reward for her generoſity in giving up her eſtate to him without reſerve. But his ſon and daughter, far from following his example, ſhun the contagion of his vices as they would a peſtilence, and for their ſakes, as well as their mother's, I ſhall forbear giving a particular account of his debauches and irregularities. Alas! how unhappy, how doubly unhappy muſt ſuch a parent be, who meets with the keeneſt reproach even from the virtues of his children! how miſerable muſt that man be, if he has the leaſt ſenſe of ingenuity, to find himſelf the diſgrace of thoſe whom nature has rendered dear to him! an object of ſhame and pity to his own offspring! They love the man, tho' they deteſt his vices; and give him their affection, tho' they are conſtrained to withhold from him their eſteem. But, dear Madam, cry'd I, with the tears ſtanding in my eyes, which the darkneſs of the evening,

however, concealed from obſervation, how does this admirable lady ſupport this complicated diſtreſs? Can ſhe have any tenderneſs for ſuch a huſband? One would think a conduct like this would undoubtedly extirpate all the ſofter paſſions from her breaſt, and leave no room for any thing but hatred and contempt. What other return can be made to ingratitude and cruelty?

No, my dear, replied my aunt, you have much too mean an opinion of this lady's goodneſs. There are very few in her circumſtances indeed who would not fly out into the greateſt extravagancies, and keep no meaſures with a man, who behaved with ſo little regard to the happineſs of his family. They would make the houſe, when-ever he was preſent, an almoſt perpetual ſcene of uproar; or at leaſt would take all opportunities of publiſhing his vices and follies. But ſhe, on the contrary, led by the ſweetneſs of her temper, has endeavoured to make him ſenſible of the baſeneſs of his conduct, by conſtantly ſhewing herſelf worthy of his eſteem. She loves him ſtill, in ſpite of his cruelty; and I dare ſay, would think herſelf very happy if the loſs of her eſtate would recover his heart; even if to obtain this bleſſing they were reduced

to

to a ſtate of meanneſs and poverty. She has too much good-ſenſe not to ſee that quarreling, and ill-humour from her, would greatly increaſe his averſion for her company, and not only widen the breach between them, but be attended with the moſt unhappy effects with reſpect to their children; ſince it would infallibly weaken their mutual authority over them, make them divided, and become partners in their unhappy diſcords; and, eſpecially while they were young, might have withdrawn their affection from the man ſhe loved more dearly than herſelf, and who, notwithſtanding his ill conduct, had a right to their dutiful obedience. Had this been the caſe, it is eaſy to ſee the fatal conſequences that would undoubtedly have followed, not the leaſt of which would have been a want of education, a diſregard of all inſtruction, and their being deprived of all thoſe juſt principles of virtue and honour, which raiſe the man above the brute, and render him worthy of the character of a rational and ſocial being: for they would probably have diſregarded the advice of thoſe whoſe quarrels gave them perpetual uneaſineſs. But this amiable lady's prudence is viſible in nothing more than in concealing the follies of her huſband, which ſhe does with as much

care as if they were more immediately her own. She endeavours to hide even his leaſt foibles, not only from her children, but from all the world. And I think I may ſafely affirm, that no one ever heard her ſay an unkind or diſreſpectful word of him.

WHAT an admirable character, Madam, replied I, have you given us of this charming lady! How happy would moſt women find themſelves, if *they* were as tender of their husbands reputations! With what pain have I heard a lady, otherwiſe of good ſenſe, expatiate for an hour together on the little trifling domeſtic quarrels, which have happened between herſelf and her conſort! How frequently do we hear married women dwell with a malicious ſatisfaction upon thoſe vices, which prudence alone, without the leaſt degree of love, ought to teach them to conceal! For a woman always ſtands in ſome degree in the ſame light with her husband, and ſhe cannot certainly make him appear infamous, without throwing a load of diſgrace upon herſelf: and beſides this, people will always be ready ſecretly to imagine, that ſhe herſelf muſt be guilty of ſome imprudence, which ſhe dare not diſcover, that gave riſe to the vices and injuries ſhe ſo warmly exclaims againſt.

You

YOU are much in the right, my dear, returned my aunt; and I am very glad to hear you have ſuch juſt ſentiments, ſince I hope they will influence your own conduct, if ever you ſhould be in circumſtances to require it.

THIS converſation, which was drawn out to a conſiderable length, took up our time till we arrived at my aunt's. But I muſt not omit one particular, which indeed is too agreeable for me to conceal, which was, that Lucius and his ſiſter had each of them a fortune of 5000 l. left them by a relation, who died a few months ago.

YOU ſee, Madam, with what confidence I lay open the diſadvantageous circumſtances of a family, in whoſe happineſs I intereſt myſelf; and can I give you a more convincing proof of the ſincerity of my friendſhip? My father, notwithſtanding his natural generoſity, and tenderneſs for me, will never, I am afraid, conſent to my entering into an alliance ſo extremely beneath what my fortune may ſeem to require. I tremble at the thought of diſobliging him, and am reſolved, whatever it coſt me, to conform myſelf to his will. However, I may be miſtaken. It is poſſible that a proſpect of my happineſs may outweigh

all conſideration of meaner intereſts and advantages.

FORGIVE me now, if you can, for troubling you with theſe melancholy thoughts, which I endeavour in vain to ſuppreſs. While this is the caſe, you muſt not wonder at my dulneſs, which, in my opinion, is leſs pardonable than impertinence, ſince the one may poſſibly make you ſmile at leaſt, while the other can have no better effect than to give you the vapours, which if you can eſcape, after reading this heavy epiſtle, I ſhall not deſpair of ſeeing you in my condition; that is, frequently amuſing yourſelf with a dull walk, amidſt dull trees, dull fields, and talking to your duller ſelf; but heaven preſerve you from ſuch a change. And may you ever think me, as I really am, in ſpite of love, vapours and melancholy,

Your ſincere Friend.

THE moment I had written the firſt letter of that dear expreſſive word *friend*, by which I would always have you underſtand, whenever I make uſe of it, a thouſand nameleſs ideas of affection, ſympathy, and whatever you can imagine elſe moſt agreeable and endearing; I ſay at the very inſtant as I was concluding my letter, I heard Amelia enter my room, when turning

turning my head, ſhe told me with a ſmile, that the amiable Marilla was juſt come to pay us a viſit; then immediately forgetting what I was about, I aroſe with a heart full of joy, threw down my pen, and ran to embrace the ſiſter of my dear —— no, that is too fond; agreeable, I ſhould ſay; —— well then, of my agreeable Lucius. We had a great deal of chat upon abundance of entertaining topics, while my deſire of engaging the friendſhip of this lady, made me diſcover an unuſual gaiety; or rather, the friendſhip I had already conceived for her, threw off all my reſtraint, and made me treat her with the ſame open ſatisfaction, as if I had been convinced that ſhe had already entertained the ſame friendſhip for me; ſo that in a little time we grew as intimate, as if our acquaintance had been of a long ſtanding. No reſerve, no diffidence, no reſtraint ſubſiſted between us: all our behaviour was frankneſs, vivacity, and the utmoſt extent of ſprightly freedom. You yourſelf, my dear Charlotte, (forgive my ſaying ſo) had you unexpectedly come to ſee me, could hardly have made a greater change in the ſituation of my mind. How ſwift a progreſs does friendſhip make, when a perſon begins with ſuch diſpoſitions!

A deſire of being agreeable is the readieſt way of making ourſelves ſo.

MY aunt had not only invited this lady to ſee us, at our laſt viſit, but hearing me expreſs an extreme deſire of enjoying that ſatisfaction, at our return, ſent the next day a letter to her mamma unknown to me, to deſire her to permit her to ſtay a day or two at our houſe. A favour that I could not help being highly ſenſible of; and from which you may judge of the pains ſhe takes to make my ſtay in the country agreeable to me.

MY new companion and I, not content with engroſſing almoſt all the converſation to ourſelves, reſolved to take a little turn in the fields, to indulge our young friendſhip with diſcourſing on ſome ſubjects not proper for a mixed company, and therefore finding an opportunity of leaving our companions, we ſlipped into the garden, and from thence went into a retired walk, where we might lay open our hearts without the leaſt reſtraint. A gentle breeze that whiſper'd among the trees, the fragrance of the air, and the awful ſilence of the evening, contributed to ſoften my mind, and charm my ſenſes. The

——— *Twilight grey*
Had in her ſolemn livery all things clad:

——— While

——— While *the moon,*
Riſing in clouded majeſty ———
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerleſs light,
And o'er the dark her ſilver mantle threw.

MILTON.

WE walked ſlowly on, at firſt diſcourſing upon indifferent ſubjects, till the amiable Marilla mentioned her brother, and told me he deſired her to preſent his humble reſpects to me. This gave me an opportunity of aſking how he did, and happily introduced a converſation more intereſting than can well be conceived. I fancy, Miſs, ſaid I, you muſt be very happy in the friendſhip and tenderneſs of this gentleman; he ſeems poſſeſſed of extraordinary merit. Ah, Madam, returned ſhe, I am more happy than can be imagined. He has an extreme affection for me, and there ſubſiſts ſuch a harmony between us, as is very rarely ſeen in ſuch near relations. It is his chief ſtudy to improve my mind; and he has taken inconceivable pains in giving me thoſe juſt principles of virtue, which I hope will always influence my conduct. I find in him not only a brother, but a ſincere and affectionate friend. We have but one common intereſt. He truſts me with the ſecrets of his heart, and

in ſhort, we are ſo cloſely united, that were I unhappy, he would feel as much for me, as perhaps I ſhould for myſelf. Well, my dear, replied I, (endeavouring ſtill to diſcover whether ſhe was acquainted with his paſſion) I could almoſt envy you the pleaſure of enjoying theſe dear ſocial delights. I never knew what it was to have a brother; and if I had, I might have been a ſtranger to your happineſs. There are very few ſuch brothers and ſiſters as you. Here I preſſed her hand with much affection, charmed with the engaging idea ſhe had given me of her own felicity. She was ſome minutes before ſhe replied, and perhaps was at a loſs for an anſwer; however, at laſt recovering herſelf, dear Miſs, ſaid ſhe, I aſſure you it is an addition to my happineſs, to find that you entertain ſuch favourable ſentiments of us. Lucius would be tranſported with joy, if he could have heard from your lips that he has any ſhare in your eſteem. It is true, he has ſome merit, a great deal more than I can boaſt of, ſince I owe great part of mine to him; yet you are pleaſed to honour me with your friendſhip, while he —— ſhe here appeared pretty much confuſed, and, as if at a loſs how to proceed, ſtopped and ſtood ſilent: but at laſt, ſeeming to recollect herſelf, inſtead

inſtead of going on, ſhe reſumed, Had he a fortune equal to yours, he would perhaps be better able to tell you himſelf thoſe tender ſentiments which ſwell his heart. Has Lucius then, replied I with an innocent tone, and an air of aſtoniſhment, any ſentiments which he is afraid to diſcover to me? I can ſcarcely believe it, though you yourſelf are pleaſed to tell me ſo. However, I have ſo juſt an opinion of his virtue and fine ſenſe, that I hardly think him capable of ſaying any thing diſagreeable. And may I tell him this? replied Marilla in a kind of extaſy. Why not? returned I; it would be a great misfortune, if we were never to be honoured with any company but ſuch as were upon a level with us, with reſpect to fortune. A pride of this kind would be the greateſt curſe, ſince there are innumerable bleſſings in life, infinitely more valuable than all the advantages that can procure us. The charms of a virtuous and upright mind are internal; they conſtitute a real merit, and reflect a glory upon the poſſeſſor. A glory in compariſon of which all other advantages are ſuperficial and trifling.

WE were here interrupted by Amelia, who ſaw us go into the garden, and perceiving us at ſome diſtance, came running to rejoin us, with

with whom we preſently returned home. And Maril'a leaving us the next day, I have nothing further to add, than that I am,

DEAR MADAM,

Your's moſt affectionately,

FELICIA.

LETTER VI.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

NOTWITHSTANDING the friendly congratulations you give me upon the late acquiſition of fortune I received by the death of my uncle, I can aſſure you with the utmoſt ſincerity, that it gives me little or no pleaſure. This I believe will ſurpriſe you, ſince, as you juſtly obſerve, I can't be ſuppoſed to grieve for the loſs of a gentleman I have never ſeen, and who conſequently can't have endear'd himſelf to me by any of thoſe proofs of affection we receive from thoſe we frequently converſe with. Nor would I have you believe that I am ſuch a perfect Stoic, as to be abſolutely inſenſible of the grandeur, the riches and honours of life. Theſe, it muſt be confeſſed, have ſeducing charms, and are apt to intoxicate our minds with

with the moſt pleaſing proſpects of future bliſs. They naturally ſwell the imagination with high-wrought ſcenes of delight; nor can a perſon of my age receive them without feeling ſome engaging ideas of that homage, that reſpectful awe, which ſo agreeably flatters our vanity, that darling foible of youth! Gold, whoſe ſovereign charms are univerſally felt, attracts every heart; all are delighted with the advantages it procures. The grave philoſopher too often ſacrifices at this ſhrine; and the more devout prieſt, who with ſuch eloquent harangues on Sundays upon the contempt of riches, and with ſuch a parade of learning and elegance of expreſſion, exhorts us to contemn the tranſitory enjoyments of life, thoſe vanities, thoſe baubles, thoſe unſatisfying and peſtilential goods, in ſpite of all his opprobrious epithets, is ſtill captivated by this magic, and perhaps not one amongſt them all would look with ſuch inſenſibility on the acquiſition of ten thouſand pounds as I do.

AFTER this long preamble, you poſſibly begin to wonder what I would be at, and are ready perhaps to imagine that I am either very vain, or elſe, that pleaſed too much with the ſolitude of a country life, I am become a ſort of

of female hermit. But neither of theſe is the caſe.

I HAVE not yet excluded all thoughts of making a gay appearance in life; nor do I find any charms in ſuch a retirement, as would deprive me of an opportunity of being ſerviceable to my fellow creatures, and enjoying thoſe ſocial pleaſures, which are ſome of the greateſt ſweetners of life. But to be ſincere; this long piece of ſlander, which may at firſt ſight appear ſo injurious to the honour of philoſophers and prieſts (I beg the clergy's pardon, prieſts and philoſophers I ſhould ſay, ſince the ſacred character of the gown-men demands that I ſhould give them the preference) this piece of ſlander I ſay, was only introduced to raiſe your curioſity.

AH! my Lucius, can I taſte the ſweets of a fortune, which will doubtleſs be a bar to my happineſs, and render it impoſſible for me to be thine! This is a reflection which damps all my joy. Alas! how weak is ambition, when compared to love!

THE day after Marilla left me, I had the pleaſure of ſeeing her brother. He had an air of unuſual ſatisfaction in his look; and perhaps encouraged by the repetition ſhe had doubtleſs made him of that converſation I related in my laſt,

laſt, in which I ſo freely confeſſed my regard for him, he ſpoke methought with leſs diffidence; his behaviour was more polite; his manner leſs conſtrained; while a thouſand tender nameleſs graces, which I had never diſcovered before, rendered him ſtill dearer to my heart. I now felt myſelf inſenſibly awed by his preſence, and in proportion as he became more unconſtrained, I grew more thoughtful. I would gladly have reſumed my uſual gaiety, but it was impoſſible; the company of my aunt and couſins became burthenſome, and I began to fear their diſcovering in my eyes that flow of tender friendſhip, that dear tranſporting extaſy, which ſwelled my breaſt. To recover myſelf from this ſweet diſorder, I haſtily aroſe and retired into the garden, where I gave a looſe to reflection without fear of being obſerv'd; I then began to revolve in my mind, the danger of indulging a paſſion, which would probably prove fatal to my repoſe, ſince I could not have the leaſt proſpect of its ever being countenanced by my father's approbation. I therefore blamed myſelf, and after a long debate, reſolved to uſe all my endeavours to conquer my growing weakneſs: but I had hardly formed this reſolution when I ſaw Lucius enter the garden. I was then ſitting in an

arbour

arbour covered with woodbines, whoſe flowers embalmed the whiſpering breezes with a pleaſing fragrance. He ſaw me, and immediately approaching with an air of reſpect, aſked me if his company would not be a diſagreeable interruption of my ſolitude. I replied, that as my thoughts were only engaged on trifles, it would be no pain to me to place them upon more agreeable ſubjects. But, why, Sir, added I ſmiling, have you left the ladies? I am obliged to return home, ſaid he, and your aunt having this minute received a letter, I took the opportunity while ſhe was reading it, of coming to take leave of you.

I HAD now entirely forgot the reſolution I had juſt taken to arm my heart with inſenſibility, and filled with a ſoft and pleaſing ſurpriſe at the unexpected company of my lover, even a letter from London could not awake the leaſt curioſity, tho' I did not doubt its coming from my father. Lucius now ſat down by me upon the bank of camomile which almoſt ſurrounded the arbour, when I expected every moment to hear him enter upon the moſt delightful ſubject, love; but though he was more aſſured than ever I had ſeen him, the reſtraints of a modeſt diffidence ſtill tied his tongue, and made him for ſome time

time preſerve a ſilence which I did not care to interrupt. He opened his lips ſeveral times, but quivering with fear, they inſtantly cloſed without uttering a ſyllable; but at laſt ſeeming to collect all his fortitude, Forgive me, Miſs, ſaid he, giving me a look inexpreſſibly tender; forgive a behaviour, which doubtleſs makes me appear extremely ridiculous; but it is impoſſible to ——— Here he caſt down his eyes, with a ſigh, while a flood of ſoft and melting ideas ſeemed to choak up his voice; but at laſt, finding I waited to hear him conclude, he lifted up his head, when I ſaw his face covered with a deep bluſh, while every feature was expreſſive of the moſt violent emotions. How impoſſible is it, dear Madam, reſumed he, with a faltering voice, to give utterance to a paſſion too tender to be deſcribed ——— and too ——— too preſumptuous to be forgiven, added he, with a look and tone that ſpoke the deepeſt deſpair.

DURING this ſpeech, which, ſhort as it was, took up a conſiderable time, methought I felt all the throbbings of his heart. I ſeemed conſcious of all that dread, that love, and all thoſe terrible apprehenſions, which bewildered his thoughts in a maze of confuſion, and made him tremble at a diſcovery, which, tho' he

he reſolved to make, he dreaded the effects it might produce. But notwithſtanding this ſympathetic penetration, and all the diſturbance it had a natural tendency to create, the very cauſe of my pain was the ſource of the tendereſt and moſt exquiſite pleaſure; the ſofteſt and moſt ſoothing delight. As ſoon as he concluded, he waited for my reply in a kind of agonizing ſuſpence; but tho' I was a moment at a loſs how to return an anſwer, I ſuffered my eyes to expreſs a pity and compaſſion capable of diſperſing his moſt alarming fears, had he dared to have lifted up his to obſerve them. But when I ſpoke, a glance immediately met mine, which inſtantly brightening, ſeemed to diſcover my meaning before I could give it utterance. I aſſure you, Sir, ſaid I in a mild tone, that I am not at all diſpoſed to increaſe your confuſion by ridiculing the painful diſorder which has accompanied this too tender declaration. I am ſenſible of your merit, and don't think you capable of an attempt to deceive me. Believe me, Sir, I look upon you as my friend, and therefore entreat you to reflect a little upon the obſtacles that will inevitably oppoſe your wiſhes. However, I freely confeſs, if that will give you any ſatisfaction, that were I at my own diſpoſal, you would

would perhaps have no reaſon to complain of my ſeverity.

YOU can't conceive, my dear Charlotte, what a ſudden change this obliging reply made upon the countenance and behaviour of my lover.——You are now ready to imagine that I ſhall deſcribe him throwing himſelf at my feet, while with a flow of rapture, he admires my ſuperlative goodneſs, blending his praiſes with two or three hundred adorables, tranſcendent excellencies, infinite perfections, incomparable creatures, and abundance of other fine things of the ſame ſtrain; and that to conclude his panegyric, he tells me how aſtoniſhed he is, that a goddeſs ſo heavenly fair, can have the condeſcention to caſt the luſtre of her brilliant eyes, and raiſe to life a wretch ſo contemptible, ſo abſolutely beneath her leaſt regard.——But if theſe were your thoughts, you were extremely miſtaken; for I did not hear him utter the leaſt ſyllable of this ſublime nonſenſe. He is too good a chriſtian to deify his miſtreſs, and has too good an opinion of me to think I ſhould be pleaſed with ſuch ſenſeleſs homages. In ſhort, in ſpight of his humility, his love was incapable of blinding him ſo far as to make him forget that I was a very woman ſtill, a being of the ſame ſpecies with himſelf,

and therefore he neither debaſed himſelf, nor attempted to pleaſe me with flattering praiſes.

AFTER all, I am terribly afraid that I ſhall be unable to give you any tolerable idea of the concluſion of this affecting ſcene. The dreadful agitations, which were before ſo viſible in every feature of his face, were now inſtantly changed to thoſe of joy; a thick cloud that covered his eyes in a moment diſperſed; they ſparkled with unuſual brightneſs, while gratitude and love, ſurpriſe and extaſy, appeared in ſwift ſucceſſion on his countenance, and painted there all the motions of his heart. As deſpair had before kept him ſilent, the contrary paſſion had now the ſame effect; but as ſoon as he recovered his voice, giving me a look of tender ſurpriſe and delight, O my Felicia! cried he, in a moſt moving tone; and then after a pauſe of half a minute, O my dear Felicia; have I not offended you? Am I ſo happy, ſo exquiſitely happy, as to have obtained your eſteem? Yes, Sir, returned I, (with an affected ſprightlineſs, and endeavouring at the ſame time to conceal the tenderneſs of my looks by holding down my head) I have a very great eſteem for you; but not a greater than I am perſuaded you will always deſerve. But come, (added I with a ſigh, which for my

my life I could not conceal) let us go to my aunt; this converſation grows too tender.

HERE I aroſe without waiting for an anſwer, while he followed me, at the ſame time begging my pardon, and ſaying he had forgot to tell me, that my aunt, ſeeing him go into the garden, deſired him to let me know that ſhe had ſomething to ſay to me, which ſhe fancied would not be diſagreeable. This news put me in mind of the letter he had mentioned, and therefore fearing ſhe might think me long, and perhaps form ſome ſuſpicion at ſeeing us together, I deſired him to make haſte before, and tell her I was coming; but I had no ſooner made this requeſt, than I ſtumbled at the handle of a roller which reached to the border of the path, when ſeizing my hand to help me, (tho' I was in no danger of a fall) he ſqueez'd it with an air of tenderneſs, and without ſeeming to know what he did, ſuddenly preſſed it to his boſom; giving me a look at the ſame time ſo inexpreſſibly ſoft and moving, that I could not help being extremely affected by it; and indeed my cheeks were immediately covered with a bluſh, nor could I at this haſty emotion forbear giving a ſigh, tho' I endeavoured all along to conceal theſe proofs of my ſenſibility. But the moment he took my hand from his breaſt,

breaſt, confounded at this ſudden impulſe of paſſion, which I believe would not permit him to think of what he did, he gave me a look which ſeemed to aſk forgiveneſs, and trembling held my fingers with a fearful eaſy timidity; but finding I ſeemed not to obſerve him, and that I diſcovered no marks of reſentment, joy again appeared in his looks, and he conducted me in the ſame manner to the houſe, with an air of extaſy and delight. Nor indeed was I leſs happy than he; I eaſily comprehended the ſource of every pleaſing impulſe, and could with the ſame ſatisfaction have preſſed his hand too, had not the laws of prudence and modeſt reſerve forbid it.

IT is well the prude I mention to you in one of my former letters, is not to ſee this; for theſe laſt lines would have made her loſe all patience: but ſurely it can be no crime to act from nature, where virtue is our rule; and I am ſure it is none, frankly to confeſs the innocent tranſports of our hearts to a friend. But if theſe natural ſenſations were indeed criminal, they ſoon ſuffered a ſhock that gave me no little pain.

WE entered the houſe with our minds filled with all the ſoothing ideas that could flow from a concourſe of the moſt delightful thoughts,

when

when he let go my hand, and walked in before me; but my aunt no ſooner ſaw me, than ſhe cried out with an air that diſcovered her own ſatisfaction, and at the ſame time let me ſee, that ſhe was pleaſed at thinking it in her power to contribute to mine; come, my dear, ſaid ſhe, I wiſh you joy. Here Amelia and Polly paid me the ſame compliment, and at the ſame inſtant came running in a friendly tranſport to embrace me; when at laſt putting an end to their careſſes, filled with an eager curioſity, Why do you wiſh me joy, Madam? cry'd I; pray explain yourſelf; have you a letter from London? Yes, child, return'd ſhe in an extaſy, and your father tells me, that your uncle in the Eaſt Indies has left you no leſs a ſum than ten thouſand pounds. How! added ſhe, are you not pleaſed with the news! are there no charms in being a rich heireſs! what an extravagant fortune are you like to have! —— I now put on a forced ſmile, to prevent my giving her the mortification of ſeeing how coldly I received what ſhe with reaſon imagined ſuch a ſubject of joy. And indeed I could not have behaved otherwiſe without betraying the deareſt ſecrets of my heart. At the mention of ten thouſand pounds I had been unable to diſguiſe that thoughtfulneſs, which was ſuddenly ſpread

over my face. — A painful thoughtfulneſs that was cauſed by the reflection, Had it but been Lucius that he had beſtowed it upon, O then I might have had a better proſpect of being happy! Can I receive any ſatisfaction from a circumſtance that widens ſtill farther the diſtance between him and me? Here caſting my eyes upon him, I found ſtill greater reaſon to be fill'd with diſlike at this painful ſplendid acquiſition; he ſtood with his face towards me, leaning upon the back of a chair; his eyes were caſt down with a dejected confuſion, then lifting them up to the ceiling with an air of deſpair, I perceived his face pale, a tear rolled down his cheeks, which he endeavoured to conceal by haſtily pulling out his handkerchief, and walking to the door, when having ſtaid there a minute to recover himſelf, he ſuddenly took leave to return home.

WHAT various, what ſtrong, what cruel emotions was I now obliged to conceal? But this was not all, I was conſtrained to aſſume a gay appearance. Torturing deceit! I never felt a more painful ſituation, nor ever ſure was an innocent diſguiſe accompanied with ſuch cruel anguiſh. I made theſe obſervations on Lucius's behaviour, while I ſeemed to be reading the letter which my aunt had given me,

and

and tho' I began it again as ſoon as he left us, I read it over without knowing a word it contained, except my being aſſured that what my aunt had told was but too true.

YOU now ſee, my dear, what reaſon I have to be diſſatisfied with what you have eſteemed a ſubject of joy. Vain are all the proſpects of advantage we fondly flatter ourſelves with from the acquiſition of wealth, the alluring proſpects of a gay magnificence, the ſplendid appearances of oſtentatious grandeur, while a thouſand thwarting and controuling accidents can damp our higheſt and moſt raiſed expectations, and change the very objects of our delight into the moſt painful diſquiets, the bittereſt ſources of diſcontent and trouble. ——— But I find I am running on in a reflection, which, if I was to indulge it, might carry me to a tedious length; I ſhall therefore break off in time, and conclud with deſiring you, Madam, to form an idea, if you can, of that affection with which I ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your ſincereſt Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER VII.

DEAR MADAM,

THE intereſt you take in the unhappy ſituation of Lucius's affairs, and that obliging concern for the oppoſition you fear my father will make to my happineſs, are ſuch endearing proofs of your friendſhip, that I could not read your laſt letter without feeling my breaſt glow with the moſt charming mixture of delight and affection; and indeed what higher ſatisfaction can we feel than that which naturally ſprings from the approbation of a friend in an affair ſo tender, and ſo peculiarly intereſting as that on which we fancy all our happineſs is founded. The very paſſion you appr[illegible]e, is obliged to return the obligation; and it does ſo in the moſt effectual manner, by transferring ſome of its tender feelings to the perſon who thus ſympathizes in its deareſt ſenſations.

IN ſpite of the improbability of my father's ever being brought to give his approbation to our mutual affection, I could not think of loſing Lucius, and baniſhing all thoughts of our future felicity, without a ve[illegible] painful affliction. I was willing to ſee him ſtill, tho' I ought rather

to

to have avoided his ſight as much as poſſible, ſince his company could be of no other ſervice, than to ſtrengthen a paſſion, which had already been but too deeply rooted in my heart. The admonitions of reaſon were of little effect; I was not diſpoſed to liſten to them; a more prevailing impulſe made me long to ſee him; and not hearing from him for four tedious days, I wiſhed with the greateſt ardor for an opportunity of letting him know, that the new addition to my fortune had not made me leſs worthy of his eſteem. This I fancied I ought to do in juſtice to myſelf, and form'd abundance of plauſible reaſons, which made it appear abſolutely neceſſary that I ſhould thus ſet my own character in a true light. After the hopes I have already given him, ſaid I to myſelf, can I ſuffer him to continue in an error ſo injurious to my tenderneſs, and even to my reputation too, as to think me of a ſoul ſo ſordid, as to be puffed up with the advantages of ſuperior wealth; to think I can retract the encouragement I have given him, and to believe, that elated with pride, I can now regard him with an air of ſuperiority and contempt? No; I can't bear that my dear Lucius ſhould entertain an opinion of me which I ſo little deſerve; he ſhall know that if we muſt be ſeparated, it is not

my choice; but a cruel force that renders it neceſſary. He ſhall know that I am ſtill the ſame, that I am ſtill as ſenſible of his merit as ever, and that were I at my own diſpoſal, not all the riches of the univerſe could bribe me to entertain a thought fatal to his peace and happineſs. But how, ſaid I, recollecting myſelf, ſhall I have an opportunity of undeceiving him? Does he not deprive me of the power of doing myſelf juſtice? His fears prevent my giving him the ſatisfaction of making him thoſe aſſurances, which, if I may judge of his tenderneſs by my own, would be highly agreeable to him. What then ſhall I do? Shall I write? ——— No; I can never conſent to that; it would be too forward, and diſcover too great a fondneſs, for me to make the firſt advances. Suppoſe I write to Marilla, and let her know the ſtruggle of contending paſſions, which fil my mind with ſuch a multitude of various ſolicitudes, and tender perplexities. Would not that be the ſame as writing to him, ſince ſhe would doubtleſs ſhew him her letter? But ſuppoſe I deſire her to keep it a ſecret, what then will he be the better for it? he will ſtill be as ignorant of my thoughts as ever: well then, it will be to no purpoſe to write at all. Here I fixed, and reſolved to leave him ignorant of all

that I desired he should know, till a favourable opportunity offered, that would permit me to discover my sentiments in a less exceptionable manner; and I did not doubt but my aunt's friendship for him would soon lay before me an occasion of doing it, since she was too much pleased with his company and Marilla's, to dispense with their frequently giving her the satisfaction of enjoying their conversation.

THESE reflections I made in my chamber, when having at last resolved to arm myself with patience, I went down, and conversed with Amelia for some minutes; but finding a tender melancholy grow upon my spirits, I sought for an opportunity of indulging it. And indeed when we are in this disposition the company of the most agreeable friend becomes burthensome: I therefore gave her the slip, and retired into the fields to indulge at large the soothing softness of my own ideas.

YOU smile, my dear Charlotte, at seeing me become such an unsociable creature, as to prefer my own company to that of a friend. What a strange thing is love! but tho' I am grown infinitely fond of talking to myself, and walking under the shady covert of oaks and elms, yet I am not so perfect a lover as to hold a discourse with these inanimate beings; nor

have I ever had the leaſt inclination to carve the name of Lucius upon their barks. I am not yet arrived to that degree of madneſs; nor indeed have I obſerved in any of my rambles any ſuch laſting marks of my lover's extravagance.

I HAD not long enjoy'd my retirement, when I ſaw a man croſſing the neighbouring fields with precipitation; he at laſt came up to me, and with abundance of aukward ſcrapes, after having aſk'd my name, gave me a letter, and immediately retired. As ſoon as he was gone, I caſt my eyes around to ſee if any body obſerved me; and full of a curioſity, which would not ſuffer me to ſtay till I got to my chamber, ſeated myſelf upon a bank of turf at the foot of a ſhady tree, which ſufficiently concealed me, when haſtily breaking open the letter, I had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing that it came from my dear Lucius: how tender and generous were his ſentiments! how affectionate!—but the confidence which ſubſiſts between us, gives you a right to ſee the letter itſelf. I will therefore tranſcribe it, to oblige you; and I am ſure if you have the leaſt idea of my affection for this amiable youth, you will not be ſurpriſed, if I declare that I was

charm'd

charmed with it. But without any farther preamble, I found it as follows:

MADAM,

" IT is with the utmoſt confuſion that I " reflect upon your being a witneſs of the " diſorder I diſcovered at your aunt's, at what " ought rather to be a ſubject of joy. My " hand trembles while I attempt to apologize " for my behaviour. What words can I make " uſe of to diſcover the ſincerity, the ar- " dour, the tender delicacy of my paſſion, " when I have given you ſuch reaſon to be- " lieve that it is the baſeſt, the moſt mean, " and ſelfiſh? When I have given you ſuch " cauſe to think, that I have loſt in myſelf, " in the mean conſideration of my own hap- " pineſs, the tender regard which I ought to " have for yours? But, O conſider the tow- " ering hopes to which you had raiſed me! " Conſider the charming, the extatic flood of " joy, which in a full tide of tranſporting rap- " ture raiſed me above myſelf, and ſeemed to " promiſe a felicity vaſtly beyond what my " vaineſt thoughts could have aſpired to. " Think but of the delight that muſt ſwell my " heart, at being raiſed from the moſt gloomy " deſpair of timorous love, to the unexpected

" extaſy of ſeeing my fears vaniſh: of experi-
" encing all the rapturous ſweets of the moſt
" charming paſſion; all the joy that could flow
" from the moſt exquiſite goodneſs, the moſt
" endearing condeſcenſion; and then if it be
" poſſible, do but think of what I muſt feel,
" at finding, in one moment, my high-wrought
" felicity overturned, and myſelf thrown down
" from the eminence of my aſpiring joys.

" FORGIVE, dear Madam, my endeavouring
" thus to extenuate a behaviour, which has
" diſcovered too great a regard for my happi-
" neſs, too little for your's. If it has appear'd
" ungenerous and mercenary, nothing but
" ſurpriſe can excuſe it, and nothing but ſur-
" priſe could make me in this caſe guilty of a
" conduct that makes it neceſſary for me to
" beg pardon. I have now conquered myſelf,
" and ſincerely congratulate you with the reſt
" of your friends, while with a heart over-
" flowing with your felicity, I forget my own
" miſeries. But why do I mention miſery?
" I ſhall have none while you are bleſſed: your
" happineſs ſhall be mine too. All my ſatis-
" faction and delight ſhall ſpring from the
" pleaſing contemplation of yours. What a
" delightful ſource of the nobleſt joy! I loſe
" the too preſumptuous title of your lover in

" that

" that of your friend, and may I in that cha-
" racter have the ſweet, the dear ſatisfaction
" of ſeeing you as laſtingly happy, as my
" fondeſt wiſhes would make you. May your
" virtue, with all thoſe numberleſs, thoſe
" nameleſs graces, which make even that
" and religion appear with diviner charms,
" give you all thoſe pure and noble delights,
" which it is not in the power of wealth to
" beſtow, and may both together render you
" the happieſt of mortals.

" BUT whither would my tender imagina-
" tion carry me? I could dwell for ever on
" this delightful ſubject. My heart, warm'd
" with your dear idea, would endeavour to
" make you ſenſible of what it feels for you.
" But how vaſt a diſproportion is there be-
" tween the ſwell of melting thought, and the
" flatneſs of words; they were formed to con-
" vey mere vulgar conceptions, or at moſt
" emotions leſs ſtrong and affecting; I there-
" fore want a thouſand nameleſs epithets to
" expreſs the force of my friendſhip, the de-
" lightful impulſes of my ſoul. But think
" not, dear Madam, that I have only gained
" a victory over a weak and feeble paſſion.
" Did you know with what a vaſt exceſs I
" have loved, you might perhaps form ſome

" idea of that painful ſtruggle it has coſt me
" to conquer the moſt ardent affection, and re-
" duce it to the diſintereſted ſtandard, of that
" more ſober one, which becomes a friend.
" But I beg pardon for my impertinence,
" which I am afraid has both tired and offend-
" ed you, and therefore beg leave to ſubſcribe
" myſelf,

MADAM,

Your ſincereſt,

and moſt devoted Friend,

LUCIUS.

As ſoon as I had run over the above letter, a ſudden impulſe of tenderneſs made me preſs it to my lips with a moſt pleaſing extaſy ;—— Nay, you may laugh as much as you pleaſe; I kiſs'd, I ſay, the dear characters with a tranſport of delight ; kiſs'd the ſenſeleſs paper; and having preſſed it to my heart, and ſecured it, in that ſituation I aroſe and haſtened to my chamber, in order to peruſe it more at my leiſure. I there read it over ſeveral times, but could not help reflecting how much pleaſure I loſt by that painful awe, which prevented his uttering the melting ſoftneſs of his heart when in my preſence. With what extaſy ſhould I

have

have heard ſuch tender things from his lips, eſpecially when aſſiſted with the moving tone of his voice, and the more elegant language of his expreſſive countenance. I ſhould then have been all rapture. However, I at laſt reſolved to write an anſwer, when after having blotted and ſcrawled over about half a dozen ſheets of paper without being able to pleaſe myſelf, I was obliged to lay aſide my deſign.

I COULD not diveſt myſelf of that ſoftneſs which his epiſtle had inſpired me with; all my efforts to this purpoſe proved ineffectual. A pleaſing languor, which hung upon my ſpirits, gave me ſuch a ſweet lethargy of thought, as rendered it impoſſible for me to expreſs any other ſentiments than thoſe of my heart; and they were indeed too tender to be communicated, eſpecially to a lover who wanted my father's approbation to give a ſanction to his paſſion. The next morning however I was more compoſed, and therefore wrote the following letter, which I have not yet had an opportunity of ſending to him.

" POOR LUCIUS,

" WERE I diſpoſed to triumph over
" the weakneſs of a lover, who in hum-
" ble ſtrains of ſoft complaint, lays himſelf at
" my mercy, I ſhould perhaps find ſubject
" enough in your epiſtle to rally your paſſion,
" as well as your pretended victory over it.
" But I have at preſent no inclination to in-
" dulge ſuch a ſavage gaiety, ſince it would
" probable give you pain. The flow of ten-
" der ſentiments, that delicacy of paſſion,
" which makes you deſire that I ſhould ſtill
" preſerve my eſteem for you, and your diſin-
" tereſted and warm concern for my happineſs,
" are ſo many proofs of your generoſity and
" intrinſic merit, that I can't help feeling a
" very ſenſible pleaſure every time I reflect
" upon them. Your confuſion at my good
" fortune, which I confeſs I took particular
" notice of, was too natural for me to be
" very much offended at it; and indeed I have
" rather pitied than blamed your diſtreſs. The
" advantages we receive from wealth, are as
" ſuperficial, I believe, as any we enjoy;
" and while they deprive us of that ſincerity
" and unreſerved freedom, that openneſs of
" behaviour, which perſons in inferior circum-

" ſtances

" ſtances receive from their friends, they " ſtrip us of the moſt engaging ſweets of life; " bleſſings, which not all the luxury of incum- " bering magnificence and ſtudied ſplendor, " not all the homage of empty ceremony, and " ſervile ſubmiſſion, can attone for the want " of. You ſee, Sir, I can moralize like any " philoſopher or divine, and you may poſſibly " flatter yourſelf that you have taught me this " doctrine. Do ſo if you pleaſe. I own my " regard for you; and however romantic " the Platonic friendſhip you propoſe may ap- " pear, I readily accept of it, ſince that is all " that either you or I ought to hope for. " With my ſincere reſpect to my good friend " your ſiſter, I am,

SIR,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

How many tender and affecting ſentiments was I here obliged to ſuppreſs! I was afraid of diſcovering the ſecrets of my heart, though he would doubtleſs be tranſported to find that I was as capable of love as himſelf, and that he had inſpired me with all that ſoftneſs that could flow from the moſt paſſionate affection. But to you

I have diſcovered all my weakneſs, and depend upon your friendſhip and good-nature to keep it an inviolable ſecret, eſpecially from my father, whoſe goodneſs I am reſolved never to abuſe by the leaſt act of diſobedience. I am, dear Charlotte, in ſpite of love, or any other rival paſſion,

Moſt ſincerely Yours,

FELICIA.

LETTER VIII.

MADAM,

THE ſatisfaction you diſcovered, at the little converſation-piece I gave you ſome account of, in one of my former letters, makes me glad of an opportunity to vary my ſubject, and leave the tender tale of love for a theme that even one of your gay diſpoſition, will, I am ſure, think equally entertaining and inſtructive.

THE day after I ſent you my laſt, we had the pleaſure of receiving a viſit from Mr. Stevens, the facetious old gentleman, whoſe character you are pretty well acquainted with. The afternoon was ſpent very agreeably; but before

before he took leave, my aunt, who ſtill takes all imaginable pains to contribute to my ſatisfaction, by diverſifying my amuſements, propoſed our making a ſhort excurſion the next day to a nobleman's ſeat, at no great diſtance from us. I have obſerved, ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, that my neice appears very much delighted with this part of the country; ſhe ſeems fond of agreeable landſcapes, and my deſire of retaining her here as long as poſſible, makes me willing to gratify this taſte, by ſhewing her ſuch as I don't doubt but ſhe will think both ſurprizing and agreeable. Will you, Sir, contribute to her ſatisfaction and ours, by giving us your company to-morrow. We are apt to be weary in the company of thoſe we daily converſe with; but a friend of your gaiety will enliven our converſation, and find us conſtant matter for exerciſing our wit, and rendering us even more agreeable to ourſelves. Mr. Stevens reply'd to this compliment in a very handſome manner; and at the ſame time added greatly to the pleaſure I had in proſpect, by ſaying that if it would not be diſagreeable, he would increaſe our number by bringing Lucius, and another friend with him, whoſe company he fancied would make our ſatisfaction complete. When my aunt reply'd for us all, that we gladly

gladly accepted his offer, and that ſhe was ſure the gentleman's being his friend, would be a ſufficient recommendation to us.

THE next day before dinner we had the pleaſure of ſeeing our old friend return, accompanied by a young clergyman his relation, who had juſt finiſhed his ſtudies at Cambridge, and the engaging Lucius. Our repaſt was ſhort, and that being over, we ſet out in two coaches, Mr. Stevens's, and my aunt's—But I ſhall not attempt to give a particular deſcription of all the new and uncommon proſpects which diſcover themſelves in this delightful part of the country, where nature with a liberal hand pours out her favours, and with a profuſion of frolic bounty, ſpreads a wildneſs equally extravagant and pleaſing. I paſs over the beautiful landſcapes we drove thro' in this agreeable tour, for no other reaſon than becauſe the view I had of them was too ſudden to render me capable of deſcribing them; beſides, were it poſſible for me to do it to advantage, their being ſo perfectly extraordinary might reflect a little upon my veracity, and make you imagine that my deſcriptions were too uncommon to have any real exiſtence in nature.

ARE you not ſurpriſed now, my dear Charlotte, that I can all this while forbear ſpeaking of

of my dear Lucius, ſince there is certainly a very exquiſite pleaſure in talking of the man we love: but the reaſon of my not mentioning him was, that as he went in the other coach, he could only give me now and then a glance, which ſeemed to expreſs a troubleſome kind of diffidence and ſuſpenſe, which I fancied aroſe from his longing to know what reception I gave his letter, and a fear leſt he had ſaid any thing in it that had offended me. At laſt, however, arriving at the park of my Lord M***, we by common conſent agreed to walk to the houſe. As ſoon as I ſtepped out of the coach, I could not help being extremely delighted with the agreeable ſcene which lay before us, and which I can't, for my life, help giving you ſome deſcription of. Here the intermixture of dusky groves, and lightſome plains; of woods impervious to the rays of the ſun, which now ſpread his chearing beams around us, and the agreeable openings which diſcovered the bounding deer flying to the covert of the ſhady thicket, preſented a landſcape the moſt pleaſingly rural, and worthy the attention of the moſt curious obſerver; while we found ourſelves at the entrance of a grand walk, which extending to a prodigious length, grew inſenſibly narrower, till cloſing in perſpective,

ſpective, the viſto ſeemed loſt in the grove, out of which aroſe, as if by enchantment, ſeveral lofty ſtone turrets, which I afterwards found were part of a magnificent Gothic edifice, built after a moſt extraordinary taſte. In ſhort, the whole ſcene, notwithſtanding its being very delightful, had ſuch a romantic appearance, that for ſome minutes I could think of nothing but caſtles and embowering ſhades, ariſing ſpontaneouſly to the charms of muſic; of the work of fairies, and the power of necromancy.

THE company was no ſooner joined, than after ſome compliments from the gentlemen in the other coach, and their deſiring to know my opinion of the tour we had taken, we fell inſenſibly into moralizing on the various beauties of nature, and comparing the natural connection there is between the exterior arrangements of bodies, which are formed to delight our ſenſes, and the proportions of internal beauty; the propriety of action, and the native amiableneſs of an honeſt, generous, and upright mind. That as nature had carefully formed the various ſenſes with different powers, adapted to convey delight to the ſoul, from the multitude of outward beings which ſurround us; ſo ſhe had been no leſs careful in forming the mind with ſtates and paſſions for directing its purſuit to objects

jects capable of raiſing it to the ſublimeſt pleaſures; while thoſe pleaſures not only reſult from its purity, but are the very means of exalting it to ſtill higher degrees of perfection and happineſs. What a delightful ſenſation does this azure dome give the eye! ſaid Lucius, with an air extremely graceful; could the earth be covered with a more beautiful ceiling! a finer canopy! what a pleaſing verdure clothes the ground, while it meets the limits of the high arch of heaven with intermingling ſhades? a beautiful carpet for man and beaſt! But all lovely as this ſcene appears, how much does it fall ſhort of the nobler landſcape of the mind! The honeſt man, whenever he pleaſes to review his actions, and contemplate the ſituation of his heart, perceives a pleaſing extaſy ariſing from every inſtance of his integrity. He ſees a ſymmetry even more tranſportingly beautiful than this of nature. A proportion and arangement of paſſions incomparably more pleaſing than all the various diſpoſitions of light and ſhade, of woods and paſture, of guggling ſprings and falling torrents. How vaſt the difference between the moſt lovely ſcenes, which can ariſe from the modifications of matter in its moſt complete perfection; between the tones of the moſt melting and harmonious accents,

cents, and the nicer and more delicate ſenſa-
tions of an approving conſcience! An engaging
inſtance of the divine wiſdom and benevolence,
to conſtitute the very means of advancing the
happineſs of others, the means of procuring
the ſublimeſt pleaſures to ourſelves! Very true,
rejoin'd the clergyman with a ſmile; but if
we compare the divine congratulations of rea-
ſon, the tranquil ſweetneſs, and internal ſatis-
faction of the benevolent man, the patriot,
the friend of mankind, with the ſordid pleaſures
of the ſucceſsfully ambitious, the tricking knave,
the abandoned debauchée, how vaſt, how im-
menſe a diſproportion ſhall we find in the na-
ture of their enjoyments! enjoyments as wide-
ly diſtant as the high-wrought pleaſures of
a God, and the low gratifications of the moſt
groveling animal. Well, but gentlemen, re-
plied my aunt, laughing and pulling the cler-
gyman by the ſleeve, methings you might be
ſo polite, notwithſtanding the rapture which
ſeems to carry you out of yourſelves, to allow
us a ſmall ſhare in the converſation. I am of
the ſame opinion with you, that as reaſon alone
raiſes the man above the brute, ſo the pleaſures
ariſing in the mind from a reaſonable conduct
muſt be infinitely ſuperior to thoſe of a mere
ſenſualiſt. But how ſhall we be able to per-
ſuade

ſuade theſe degenerate mortals to believe ſo? Tho' they have no notion of the pure enjoyments of the ſoul; tho' they are as loſt to reaſon, as the herd that ranges in the field, or wallows in the ſtye; and in ſhort, tho' ſome of them have hardly any thing of the man, but the outward ſhape; yet they ſtill aſſert the dignity of their nature, and would think it an affront to be put upon a level with their brethren of the grinning tribe, tho' their views, their deſires, their gratifications appear to be the ſame. Your obſervation is very juſt, Madam, returned the clergyman; for it is not the external form, which conſtitutes the man; brutes differ in ſhape, and were there any particular ſpecies of them found out with features, proportions and complexions exactly reſembling ours, we ſhould without heſitation conſider them only as mere animals, while they wanted thoſe noble qualifications of the mind, reaſon and judgment. Man (the loweſt order of rational beings) is only raiſed above them by his intellectual faculties; by a light capable of directing his purſuit, and raiſing him to the ſublimeſt elevation of paſſion and ſentiment. Strip him of this, or which is much the ſame to him, let it lie clouded and obſcured, what is he but a groveling animal, without any of

the real and diſtinguiſhing perfections of human nature. There is indeed this difference in the caſe, that man is a brute by choice, they by neceſſity: he voluntarily proſtitutes the noble powers of the ſoul, ſinks below the dignity of his being, and prefers the pleaſures of a mere animal to the manly entertainments of reaſon, the ſublime raptures of an angel. How ſhock'd are we at the birth of a monſter, eſpecially if it has a likeneſs in any of its features to one of thoſe creatures, whom we juſtly regard as ſo much below us. We can't here bear the leaſt reſemblance of the brute. Even the moſt bloody, the moſt hardened villain is ſtruck with horror at this external depravity in one of his own offſpring, he ſickens at the ſight; and yet at the ſame time can ſupport the more monſtrous diſproportion of his own corrupt and diſorder'd appetites. Really, replied Amelia, with a ſprightly air, I think the irrational world are but little obliged to you for your compariſons: were they able to ſpeak for themſelves, they might very juſtly tell you, that they have no thoughts of luxury, pride, ambition, avarice, and the long train of enormities practiſed by mankind. The moſt ſavage and voracious animal never kills to encreaſe his wealth, or open a way to grandeur. It ſlays to ſatisfy his hunger, or in

a natural defence of his own life, or of thoſe whom he is prompted by inſtinct to preſerve.

LUCIUS, perhaps influenced by an impulſe of benevolence, which would not ſuffer him to hear this ſtrong repreſentation of the vices of mankind, without feeling ſome uneaſineſs, preſerved all this while a profound ſilence; but finding they had done, he was going to make a reply, when I prevented him, by ſaying, You were pleaſed, Sir, ſome time ago to vindicate mankind, from the charge of a natural depravity and propenſion to vice; and I muſt confeſs, that I was charmed with your reaſoning, though what I have now heard, makes me a little ſuſpect it. You know, you endeavoured to prove from experience, that ſo far from having any natural impulſe to lead us on to vice, we had a moral ſenſe implanted in the mind, directly calculated to ſpur us on to the moſt amiable heights of virtue; but how is this conſiſtent with the picture that has been juſt given, in which, perhaps, the far greateſt part of mankind is included? I freely confeſs, that your ſentiments of the moral ſenſe made ſuch an impreſſion upon my mind, that I have conſidered it as a very favourite opinion, and therefore have waited all this while in expectation of its being brought into the ſubject, with

which it ſeems to have ſome connection; but inſtead of that, reaſon alone has been mentioned; though I imagined, that thoſe inward impulſes to virtuous actions ſuperſeded the uſe of it. But both I find are inſufficient for the happineſs of mankind, ſince there is undoubtedly more vice than virtue in the world. It muſt be acknowledged, Miſs, ſaid Lucius, that there is too much reaſon for the diſagreeable repreſentation that has been made of a general depravity. The moſt ſacred engagements are daily violated; friendſhip and love, the moſt endearing bonds of ſociety, are made a cloak to perpetrate the moſt execrable villanies, the ruin of innocence, the deſtruction of the unſuſpecting and honeſt man. The traitor to his country aſſumes the honourable name of the patriot, and pretends to be ſtruggling for liberty, while he is only paving the way to greatneſs, in order to riot in the ſpoils of his injured fellow-ſubjects. In ſhort, whole orders and degrees of men ſeem infected with the dreadful contagion of vice and immorality, a more than brutal diſſoluteneſs of manners. A dreadful ſpectacle indeed! a ſhocking depravity that muſt fill every generous mind with an affectionate pity and concern! But let us leave this gloomy, this diſagreeable ſubject, and with

hearts warmed with a love of truth and virtue, impartially enquire if vice is really ſo prevalent, as upon a ſuperficial view it appears to be; by which means, I hope you will be convinced, that virtue reigns more univerſally than vice, and that by the conſtitution of nature, mankind have, even in this imperfect ſtate, more real, more exquiſite happineſs than miſery. An eſtimate of the utmoſt conſequence both to the honour of human nature, and to demonſtrate the wiſdom and benevolence of that moral being, who is the father of the human ſoul, and the invariable, inexhauſtible ſource of the moſt perfect and complete goodneſs.

IN order then to form a right judgment of mankind, not the band of ruffians, not the public or private ſtews, not the gloomy dungeon filled with guilty wretchedneſs; but mankind in general muſt be the ſubject of our examination. We muſt extend our views, and glance upon the virtues and vices of all the known world; and here we ſhall find the greateſt reaſon for an univerſal benevolence; we ſhall ſee with pleaſure a noble ſimplicity of manners, and an integrity of heart, delightfully conſpicuous amidſt the barbariſm of ignorance, the ſuperſtition of wild uncultivated nations. We ſhall ſee the ſame love of their country, the ſame

tender ſenſibilities of friendſhip, the ſame natural affection, the ſame reciprocal endearing offices of ſocial life, with the far diſtant unpoliſhed ſavage, as with the polite and learned European. Nature even here works ſtrongly; virtue and vice have names in all languages, and ſo deeply is the image of the deity impreſſed upon univerſal nature, that every rational being has, in general, the ſame ſenſe of an obligation, the ſame delightful ſenſations ariſing from the conſideration of the native and intrinſic excellence of actions beneficent, diſintereſted and generous.

LET us next conſider if the uſual manner of forming a judgment of private actions be conſiſtent with truth and equity. While the mind, like the eye, can only glance on the ſurface of things, we can have but a very narrow view of the ſprings and motives which actuate even our deareſt friends, and moſt intimate acquaintance. How incapable then are we to form a juſt opinion of the actions of thoſe whoſe paſſions, whoſe inclinations and peculiar turn of mind, we are entirely unacquainted with? We are free in our cenſures; we precipitately blame the conduct of others; yet, however certain we may think the judgment is, which we paſs upon their conduct, a little time often

convinces us, that our concluſion was formed merely upon fallacious appearances; and that we judged of the motive, not from the action it was really formed to produce, but from the falſe and deceitful light it appeared in to us. A conſideration that ſhould kill at once all diſpoſition to calumny and cenſorioufneſs, the blackeſt and moſt ignominious of all vices. Thus it frequently happens, that thoſe actions which, at firſt view, ſeem vicious, upon a more ſtrict examination, appear to be ſtrictly virtuous; and from this experience of the erroneouſneſs of our judgments, and that the truth of the caſe, when diſcovered, generally leans to the ſide of virtue, it will not ſure be thought unreaſonable to conclude that it is generally ſo in other inſtances; and that if the real ſpring and motive to action was conſidered, virtue would greatly preponderate, and her votaries be vaſtly more numerous than the votaries of vice.

THE moral ſenſe, Madam, is a taſte for what is amiable; that diſtinguiſhing faculty of the mind which makes us *feel*, ——— ſenſibly and ſtrongly *feel*, ——— the harmony and diſcord of actions. It is the *touch*, the *ear* of the ſoul; while reaſon is the *eye* to regulate the exertions of this ſympathetic faculty. The moral ſenſe feels inſtantaneouſly without waiting

for the ſlow deliberation of the rational powers, to know if it ought to do ſo: while reaſon is given us to reign ſupreme, to examine the fitneſs of the object by which we are intendered, and to regulate in what manner we muſt exert our benevolent offices, ſo as beſt to render our endeavours ſubſervient to the general good and happineſs. Thus reaſon, like a mild and gracious prince, is to direct the will, and give laws to the paſſions and appetites, in ſuch a manner as not only to promote the general intereſt and felicity of the mind it inhabits; but to diffuſe its friendly and benign influences to all its fellow minds: and when this is the caſe, we act in conformity to the moſt perfect virtue. On the contrary, vice is nothing elſe but a miſapplication, and abuſe of ſome right and laudable affections; ſo evident is it, without arguing from the perfections of the deity, that he has not formed any of his creatures with a vicious biaſs and propenſity.

HERE the clergyman ſeeing Lucius make a pauſe, rejoin'd, the intention ought always to be the rule of our judgment on the conduct of others; for in this ſtate of imperfection and difficulty, we are ſometimes unable to reduce our wills, however regular, into proper action; and indeed the event does but ſeldom cor-

reſpond

reſpond with our diſpoſitions. We ought not therefore to determine a character vicious from one or two bad actions; nor from the comparatively few abandon'd wretches, to pronounce human nature in general abandon'd. But by what means are we able to judge of the intention, or to ſearch into the ſecret ſprings of action? We can't take in half thoſe minute circumſtances that attend them, the leaſt of which might poſſibly be ſufficient to alter our opinion: ſo far from this we judge, not according to the temper and ſituation of the perſon cenſured, but from our own particular ſenſe of things. Thus, to a generous open mind, a little parſimony may appear as a mark of a narrow contracted ſpirit; but upon examination into the perſon's circumſtances it will be found, perhaps, to be nothing more than a prudent concern for the welfare and ſupport of his family, and ſo far from being a blemiſh to his virtuous character, may be an effect of that virtue which it ſeems to contradict. But farther to illuſtrate this engaging truth, which ſeems abſolutely neceſſary to the peace and ſatisfaction of every benevolent and compaſſionate mind, let us conſider that in this ſtate of imperfection, we are no more capable of arriving at a perfection in vice, than we are of virtue. The moſt aban-

don'd of our ſpecies, have ſome amiable qualities which it is impoſſible for them to eraſe; virtue has ſtill ſome engaging charms; nor is it poſſible for any man of common ſenſe not to feel the force of its attractive beauties; therefore if deceived by falſe appearances and deluſive proſpects of preſent pleaſure, they rebel in one inſtance, there are others in which they venerate her ſacred laws.

BE ſincere now, my dear Charlotte, and confeſs that I have wearied you with the repetition of this grave converſation. A variety of other remarks were made upon the ſame ſubjects, which entertained us till we arrived at the houſe; but in pity to you and myſelf, I ſhall make haſte to conclude, and only ſay, that we were entertained with much politeneſs by my Lord; when having drank tea, we drove home, highly delighted with our agreeable excurſion; but there is one particular that I ought not to forget to mention, and that is, that before I took leave of Lucius I found an opportunity to give him my letter. He received it with an air of aſtoniſhment and confuſion, imagining, I believe, that it was his own I returned; but a ſudden glance of his eye in a moment diſcovered his miſtake, when his countenance changed from a troubled paleneſs

to

to a glowing red. He had not then an opportunity of ſpeaking to me; but giving me a look ſparkling with joy and ſurpriſe, he retired in ſuch a manner as diſcovered his impatience to know the contents. I am now heartily weary; and begging you would pardon the impertinence of your friend, ſubſcribe myſelf,

MADAM,

Your moſt obliged and
affectionate Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR ENGAGING FRIEND,

COULD I poſſibly imagine, that with a temper ſo eaſy, gay and ſprightly, I ſhould be able to make ſuch a change in your diſpoſition, as I find my illneſs has occaſion'd. How endearing is that tender concern, that pleaſing warmth of affection with which you intereſt yourſelf in my diſorder, and endeavour to ſupport my ſpirits by the ſoothing ſympathies, the reviving conſolations of friendſhip.

IT is now two months ſince I was ſeized with a fever; and I have yet hardly ſtrength to write to you; but I can't forbear making an attempt to remove your fears; by telling you as ſoon as poſſible, that I am at laſt out of danger. I have lately had a near proſpect of death; but while I ſtood upon the verge of that awful ſtate, that undiſcovered country, "from whoſe bourn no traveller returns", I felt my mind calm and ſerene, as if charm'd with the inſpiring harmony of ſome angelic choir: all before me was extaſy, the moſt tranſporting extaſy! raptures unutterable, delights boundleſs and eternal! But my intervals of ſenſe were ſhort, and diſturb'd with pain; I was almoſt continually delirious; and in theſe diſtractions of mind inceſſantly repeated the beloved name of my dear Lucius. I gave him the tendereſt epithets; and wrapt in a fond deluſion of thought, fancied he walk'd with me through the moſt delicious ſcenes imagination could paint, uttering the ſofteſt, the moſt melting words; to which I replied in terms full of the ſame paſſionate tenderneſs. The whole family were witneſſes of theſe wild rovings of fancy, which can't fail of raiſing ſome ſuſpicions of what I have endeavoured to

conceal

conceal with the utmoſt care; tho' none but Amelia has taken notice of it to me. But how Lucius behaved I am yet altogether unacquainted; nor durſt I enquire.

I FIND, my dear Charlotte, that I muſt break off; a painful languor depreſſes my ſoul; my ſpirits ſink, and I am too much fatigued to proceed. If what I write is either unintelligible, or more than commonly incoherent, a trembling hand, and giddy head are my excuſe; but however indiſpoſed I am, nothing ſhall excuſe me from being,

DEAR MADAM,

Sincerely Your's,

FELICIA.

LETTER X.

MADAM,

I AM now able to write you a longer letter than my laſt; a circumſtance that gives me the higheſt pleaſure; ſo glad am I, at being able to reſume my literary converſation with you.

As ſoon as I was able to leave my room and receive company, I had a viſit from the maiden lady, Mr. Stevens's ſiſter, whom I ſhall diſguiſe under the name of Prudilla; and indeed I had no reaſon to be offended at ſeeing her, ſince I might well bear with her impertinence for the ſake of the perſon ſhe brought with her. Lucius, impatient for an opportunity of ſeeing me; which he durſt not even attempt alone, for fear of giving my aunt ſome ſuſpicion of the intereſt he had in my recovery, had offered his ſervice to wait upon her, which ſhe accep ing, gave us both the means of indulging by our mutual glances, the tender ſentiments which ſwelled our boſoms. The moment he enter'd the room I could read in his looks, that he had a thouſand things to ſay to me, only proper to be uttered in private. His countenance diſcovered a joy, which glow'd in every feature; but

but when he congratulated me upon my returning health, a fear of ſaying too much, made him ſay too little; but however few his words, the air and moving tone in which he uttered them, ſufficiently expreſſed how much they came from his heart. Need I tell you, Madam, ſaid he (turning his back to my aunt, doubtleſs to prevent her reading his looks) that I ſympathiſe with the reſt of your friends in their joy for your recovery? While a ſtarting tear, and a glance the moſt charmingly tender, made me at once interpret his meaning, and fancy that he would have ſaid, O my dear! with what tranſport do I ſee you again! how vaſtly does my extaſy at your recovery, exceed the cold joy of theſe other friends!

OUR firſt compliments being over, and abundance of queſtions aſked concerning the nature and progreſs of my illneſs, Prudilla introduced a piece of private hiſtory, which gave her a charming opportunity of indulging for a few minutes her prevailing inclination for detraction. Have you heard the news, Ladies? ſaid ſhe, aſſuming an air of ſtarch'd modeſty; really, it is ſo extraordinary that it makes one aſhamed of one's ſex. To what a prepoſterous height of wickedneſs is the world grown! Poſitively one is ſurpriſed to think of the impudence of

ſome

ſome people. Would you think it? Miſs Lucy was, (I bluſh for the creature)—Pray, Madam, ſaid my aunt, explain yourſelf; what of Miſs Lucy? Really, rejoined Prudilla, the affair is ſo indecent, that it is a ſhock to modeſty but to mention it. Well, Madam, ſaid I, rather than offend your delicacy, we will let Miſs Lucy alone, and change the ſubject. That is kind, my dear, return'd ſhe ſmiling; ſhe was brought to bed laſt night; I am ſure I am all of a flame now, added ſhe, and the creature—— O Madam, cried Lucius, with a deſign to make her change the ſubject, that modeſt bluſh becomes you incomparably. Here all the company ſmiled; for Prudilla's cheeks diſcovered not the leaſt tincture of her pretended confuſion; however, his artifice had no effect. Really, reſumed ſhe, bridling back her head, and drawing up her lips, a bluſh does ſometimes become one mightily; which is ſome recompence for the pain it gives one; but as I was ſaying, the thing has the impudence to excuſe herſelf by pretending —— At this moment my phyſician enter'd the room, and gave her the mortification of being again interrupted by his asking me ſeveral queſtions; but at laſt taking a chair, ſhe reſumed a third time: As I was a ſaying, Madam, ——Pray,

ladies,

ladies, cry'd the phyſician, interrupting her again, may I know the ſubject of your converſation. Yes, Sir, replied Amelia, our friend here was mentioning a circumſtance relating to an unhappy lady that has been deluded, and was brought to bed laſt night. Very good, replied he. Not ſo good neither, cry'd the prude in a peeviſh tone. The impudent ſlut would excuſe herſelf by ſaying —— O ſhe would perſuade us to believe, I ſuppoſe, cry'd the doctor, with a ſneer, that the young gentleman, after promiſing her marriage, and ſwearing a thouſand oaths to convince her of his fidelity, finding at laſt all his arguments prove unſucceſsful, in a fit of deſpair drew his ſword; when pointing it to his boſom, he pretended that ſince ſhe was ſo cruel as to diſtruſt his ſincerity, he would give her the laſt proof of the violence of his paſſion. Here terrified at this dreadful ſight, and melting with pity, ſhe flies upon him, ſtops his hand, tells him that ſhe is convinced of his ſincerity, and will give him every proof of it he can reaſonably deſire. He now eagerly ſeizes the tender moment, preſſes her cloſe, till ſhe at laſt conſents to purchaſe his life with the loſs of what ought to be infinitely dearer to her than her own. While he in the mean time laughs to find her become the

dupe

dupe of his artifice; ridicules her fooliſh fondneſs, that could make her think him in earneſt; and, in ſhort, glories in the *noble* victory he has gained over her honour. This to be ſure was the caſe, continued he; at leaſt we ſhould be charitable enough to think ſo, in vindication of the poor lady.

WE all ſmiled at this piece of raillery, while Prudilla diſcovered by her unſettled looks, that ſhe was at a loſs to know whether ſhe ought to diſapprove or commend this inſtance of the phyſician's vivacity; ſince ſhe could not gueſs whether it was intended to ridicule all the excuſes that could be made in her favour, or to apologize for her conduct. But the moment he had done ſpeaking, Lucius rejoined with a modeſt unaffected air: We ought not to wonder if an artful villain can ſometimes triumph over a mind, who knowing itſelf incapable of deceit, can hardly be brought to ſuſpect another, eſpecially the man ſhe loves, of a guilt the moſt black and ſhocking to nature; but that an honeſt man ſhould be ſo loſt in paſſion, and hurried away by the fever of impetuous deſire, is indeed a caſe very extraordinary, and not eaſily accounted for. Can a virtuous man be ſo void of reaſon, ſo loſt to prudence and the tender delicacies of an innocent paſſion, as to

hazard

hazard for a moment the honour and reputation of her he loves? Will he not even diſtruſt himſelf? Nay, ſuppoſing him ever ſo certain of the integrity of his own heart, are there not a variety of circumſtances which may render it impoſſible for him to fulfil his engagements? And muſt not the bare poſſibility of this damp even the very firſt idea of a too precipitate pleaſure which may be ſo dearly bought? The leaſt apprehenſion of ruining the object of his tendereſt affections, muſt ſurely give him the moſt painful alarms, and fill his mind with the moſt dreadful fears, the moſt terrible conflicts. And is it not equally ſurpriſing, return'd my aunt, that a modeſt lady can hear a propoſal of this kind, without being ſhock'd! without looking into the gulf of miſery and ruin which lies before her! without trembling at the dangers which ſurround her! without imploring the divine aſſiſtance, and reſolving to loſe her life, rather than taint her virtue, or ſurrender her honour upon the faireſt promiſes! but alas! we frequently ſee people act without thought, and unintimidated by the miſery of thoſe, who have fallen into the ſame ſnare, precipitately ruſh upon their own deſtruction. A promiſe of marriage is the uſual bait; but this unhappy lady's ſtory ought to convince every one, that

even

even in the neareſt proſpect of that union; it is the higheſt degree of folly and madneſs, to drop the guard of innocence, and allow her intended husband liberties inconſiſtent with decency, and the reſerve of a modeſt prudence.

IT is a great misfortune, rejoin'd Lucius with an air of candor, that in this caſe, a falſe ſtep, (which may poſſibly proceed from nothing more than imprudence, or a too eaſy confidence) ſhould be attended with ſuch dreadful conſequences with reſpect to the ladies; and one action throw an indelible ſtain on the faireſt character, while another perſon of an infinitely worſe diſpoſition, may indulge the rancour of her heart in ſporting with the honour and reputation of thouſands. Miſs Lucy is a lady poſſeſs'd of ſo many virtues, that if the caſe required it, every one, I think, would be glad of ſeeing reaſon to believe her leſs criminal than ſhe may appear at firſt view; but if I am not miſinform'd, there is no need of wiſhing for reaſons to excuſe her conduct. A variety of extraordinary circumſtances are in her favour: her modeſty and virtue have ſtood the ſevereſt ſhock; and if it be thought that ſhe has here loſt all pretenſions to them, it ought to be conſidered too, that the day ſhe forfeited them, appeared to her, and all her friends, the laſt

laſt of her freedom. The next day was to have given him that right to her perſon which love, a reciprocal love, had conſtituted long before. She was his by obligations the moſt ſacred and binding ——— obligations that can only be confirmed, but never increaſed, either by the aſſiſtance of the magiſtrate or prieſt. They thought themſelves ſecure in each others fidelity; they fancied nothing could prevent the happy ceremony from being ſolemnized; but, alas! life itſelf is precarious; that very night he was ſeized with a malignant fever, which tho' it carried him off in a few days, in all his intervals of ſenſe he acknowledg'd his engagements, and even in his laſt moments called her his wife, and confirm'd the right he had given her in his will, to poſſeſs his eſtate, by frequently expreſſing his deſire of having it faithfully executed. How! cried Prudilla, in a lofty tone of authority, do you pretend to vindicate the creature? If ſhe has loſt her reputation, it is no more than ſhe deſerves. I would have no mercy on ſuch impudent confident things. Can any puniſhment be great enough for the ſluts who are ſuch a diſgrace to the modeſty of our ſex? They ſhould be all burnt alive, or hang'd at leaſt. ——— Hold, Madam, replied my aunt, haſtily interrupting her, indeed

deed you are too ſevere. It muſt be confeſs'd indeed, that both ſhe and her lover were much to blame: they were certainly guilty of the higheſt degree of imprudence and folly; but you ought to conſider too, that virtue does not conſiſt in the loſs of humanity and good manners. I was preſent when the young gentleman expired, and was witneſs of a ſcene that I ſhall never forget as long as I live. The very remembrance brings the tears to my eyes. A few minutes before he breathed his laſt, his ſenſes, which had been long diſturb'd return'd, when calling for his dear wife, Lucy who ſat near the bed drown'd in grief, and fatigued with her conſtant watching, ſtarted from her ſilent ſadneſs, while her impatience to know what he had to ſay, ſuſpended for a moment the falling tear. He preſſed her in his weak and trembling arms, and endeavour'd in the moſt endearing manner to enable her to ſupport his loſs; ſaid the kindeſt, the moſt affecting things; till at laſt his countenance brightening into a placid ſerenity, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and ſtill preſſing her hand, ſeemed to make her the ſubject of ſome ardent petition; but he had no ſooner finiſh'd his ſilent ejaculations, than fixing a moſt tender look upon her, he cried, Adieu, my Lucy, my wife; when

when ſhutting his eyes, he ſunk upon the pillow and expired.——— But what words can expreſs the unhappy Lucy's deſpair? She fainted away upon his lifeleſs body; her cheek lay upon his, and equalled the mortal paleneſs of that it preſſed. I aſſiſted in carrying her out of the room, and recovering her ſenſes; but they no ſooner return'd, than (ſad effect of the moſt violent grief!) her tears, her inceſſant tears were ſtopped; and ſhe gave way to a ſilent ſober melancholy, infinitely more terrible than the ſtrongeſt impulſes of raging deſpair. Alas! cried Lucius, (in a tone that plainly expreſſed the compaſſionate diſpoſition of his heart) how much is this poor lady to be pitied! but would not her diſtreſs, her ſhame, her infamy have been greater, if her grief had ſprung from his infidelity rather than his death? She now juſtly laments a man every way worthy of her eſteem and affection; his memory is ſtill dear to her; his virtues are a pleaſing ſubject of melancholy delight, and ſoothing pain. But with what agonies of rage, vexation and madneſs would ſhe have ſuſtained the ſhock of finding the man falſe on whoſe fidelity ſhe had repoſed her honour! with what mortifying inquietudes would ſhe find herſelf contemned by him ſhe loved! yet the guilt

guilt would in fact be his alone; the folly and imprudence hers. Conſcious of the purity of an innocent heart, her ſevereſt reproaches muſt fall upon the guilty villain, the barbarous betrayer of her peace and happineſs, and not immediately on herſelf. Yet how vaſtly different muſt be the reflections of a lady in theſe circumſtances, from thoſe of the ſelf-deteſted proſtitute, the abandon'd wretch, who for avarice, ambition, or guilty deſire, covers herſelf with eternal infamy and reproach; with irreparable loſs of honour; with the averſion of all the wiſe and good; with the ſilent, but infinitely more dreadful upbraidings of a guilty conſcience; the horrors of remorſe, and that agonizing dread which accompanies a conſciouſneſs of the divine diſpleaſure, doubly terrible in all her views of futurity! What ſuperlative wretchedneſs! Can imagination paint any diſtreſs equal to that which thus ariſes from the racking perturbation of a mind aſhamed of itſelf? or can all the boaſted advantages of wealth, pride, and ſucceſsful ambition, (the trifles for which the tranquil ſweets of innocence are forfeited) ſupport the ſpirits ſinking under ſuch a flood of complicated miſery?

HERE Lucius concluded, and ſome ladies coming in at the ſame time, the converſation took

took a different turn. I leave you now, my dear Charlotte, to make what reflections you pleaſe upon what I have here related; the company ſoon broke up; but I could not ſee Lucius retire with the reſt, without feeling an uneaſineſs that let me know the exceſs of my paſſion. However, he had the addreſs in parting, to ſlip the following letter into my hand unperceived; he delivered it with an air of tenderneſs, ſaying with a low voice, Since I am not permitted, Madam, either to ſend or ſpeak to you alone, forgive the abſurdity of my being my own meſſenger. I made no other anſwer than wiſhing him a good night, and, as ſoon as he was gone, ſeized the firſt opportunity of retiring to my chamber, when ſecuring the door, to prevent my being ſurpriſed, I broke open the ſeal, and read the following lines:

" DEAR MADAM,

" IF you knew with what an exceſs of grief
" I have lamented your illneſs, while I con-
" ſidered you on the borders of the grave,
" you might perhaps form ſome idea of that
" ſweet, that tranſporting joy, with which I
" find you returning to life, and all the ſatis-
" factions of health and eaſe. I can't help

" regarding

" regarding your phyſician as my deareſt
" friend; I could hug him to my boſom for
" contributing to your recovery, at the ſame
" time that I bleſs the unſeen hand of provi-
" dence, and pour out my grateful heart to
" that moſt gracious being who has heard my
" prayers, who has beheld with compaſſion my
" inceſſant tears. Amelia's friendſhip for my
" ſiſter, and the concern they have both in
" all that relates to you, have procured me an
" opportunity of learning every day the ſtate of
" your diſorder, without my running the ha-
" zard of diſcovering my paſſion to your aunt,
" by a ſollicitude that would doubtleſs render
" me ſuſpected. Yet what a multitude of
" hopes and fears has this correſpondence given
" me! in a ſwift ſucceſſion they have raiſed
" my ſoul to ſudden rapture, and then ſunk
" me down into the moſt dreadful deſpair!
" Sad viciſſitude! All my happineſs ſeemed to
" depend upon your life; and while that was
" at ſtake, a proſpect of inevitable miſery lay
" before me. All joy ſeem'd departing. A
" ſolitary ſadneſs, a dreary gloom hung upon
" my ſpirits, and hover'd round the various
" beauties of nature; they had no charms for
" me. Not wealth nor titles with all their
" ſplendor could have calm'd the anguiſh

" occaſion'd

" occaſion'd by your loſs. While I thought
" that the moſt lovely form, and the faireſt
" mind were near being ſeparated, my heart-
" ſtrings were ready to burſt, as if the very
" ſeat of life and vital heat was going to be
" torn from my boſom. Religion only had
" power to moderate my grief, and by its
" reviving conſolations diſperſe the darkening
" clouds which hung about my ſoul.——But
" how ſhall I be able to deſcribe the ſudden
" extaſy, the tranſporting rapture which fill'd
" my breaſt, when I heard that you were out
" of danger? I ſickened with a ſweet exceſs
" of delight. — But alas! to what purpoſe
" are theſe involuntary tranſports? Why
" do I place all my happineſs in ſeeing and
" hearing you, ſince no ſacred ties will ever
" bind us together, and ſecure the continu-
" ance of theſe innocent enjoyments? Ac-
" cept however of my warmeſt congratula-
" tions, and while my happineſs depends en-
" tirely upon your's, believe me to be the
" ſincereſt and moſt affectionate of your
" ſervants,

LUCIUS.

I CONFESS, my dear friend, that I could not read this letter without tears, and indulging some reflections on the unhappineſs of my ſituation; but as it is time to conclude my long epiſtle, I ſhall paſs over theſe unquiet thoughts, and ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your moſt hearty Friend,

FELICIA

LETTER XI.

FROM Amaranthine bowers, and em browning ſhades, from flowery lawns, an all the ſilent ſolemn ſcenes of peaceful inno cence and harmleſs love, thy friend Felici greets her other ſelf, her dear, her much love Charlotte.

DON'T you think now, my dear, by th beginning, that I am tolerably well read in ro mance, and have drank deep of the ſpirit o thoſe extraordinary performances. At leaſt think I ought to have ſome knowledge of them ſince I ſeem to be writing one myſelf. M plot now begins to thicken; and I ſhall ce tainly, if ever theſe letters come to light, b conſidered in ſome future time, as a little h roin

roine, while Lucius will have an undiſputed claim to the honour of being the hero of my ſtory. He has now a very formidable obſtacle to encounter with, before he can even hope to arrive at the height of his happineſs: but you need not be frighted, here are no fiery dragons to conquer, or inchanted caſtle to ſtorm; my paſtoral adventures will furniſh no ſuch prodigies. I will therefore leave theſe marvellous events to the doughty wonder-working champions of ancient date, and content myſelf with ſticking cloſe to truth and nature; and don't doubt but that in the ruſtic ſimplicity in which I ſpend my time, I ſhall furniſh a hiſtory at leaſt as entertaining as theirs. And indeed whatever name is given to my ſtory, whether of rural adventures, novel, or romance, I ſhould be very well ſatisfied, though all the world thought it fictitious, might I at laſt (which I hardly dare hope for) have it concluded, like the moſt celebrated pieces of imaginary ſcenes of love and gallantry, in a happy cataſtrophe.

As I am very fond of my couſin Polly, who is one of the prettieſt little creatures you ever ſaw, I frequently amuſe myſelf, and divert her, with gathering flowers, making garlands, and ſometimes placing them in her hair, or adorning her head with a wreath, as agreeable for its

odors, as for the intermingled luſtre of its glowing colours. You can't imagine, Madam, how charmingly the dear child looks when thus adorned; you would be apt to take her for ſome little ſylvan deity, or one of the inhabitants of the ſkies. The weather being extremely fine, we went yeſterday morning into the garden to divert ourſelves in this innocent manner, when having ſpent ſome time in our childiſh paſtime, a deſire to indulge at large my own reflections, made me leave my young companion, and retire into a neighbouring field; there I ſeated myſelf on a riſing bank, beneath which ran a ſtream that, flowing ſwiftly with a gentle murmur, drew my attention, and fixed my eyes upon the various coloured pebbles which ſhone thro' the liquid cryſtal. But tho' theſe trifles engaged my looks, my heart was fixed upon an object infinitely more important; I was thinking of my dear Lucius, and enumerating in idea not only his ſeveral perfections, but recollecting all the fine things I had heard him ſay: and could I be entertained in a manner more delightful? But I had not long indulged theſe pleaſing contemplations, when I was interrupted by my little prattler, who ſeeing me at a diſtance, came running with her hands full of flowers. I was

then ſo buried in thought, that I did not ſee her till ſhe was almoſt come up to me, when calling me to look at her treaſure, and to obſerve ſome carnations ſhe herſelf had been placing in her hair, I was ſo vex'd at being diſturb'd in my pleaſing dreams, that I could not help anſwering her a little peeviſhly, and deſiring her to leave me. She was juſtly ſurpriſed to ſee my humour ſo ſoon chang'd, and with a voice that ſpoke her out of breath with running, ſaid, She wondered how ſhe had made me angry; but that ſhe would not leave me till I had forgiven her. The tears now trickling down her roſy cheeks, made me in a moment aſham'd of my ſudden ill-nature. I took her in my arms, and fondly kiſſing her, told her I only deſired to be a few minutes alone, and begged ſhe would tell me what ſhe wanted. You told me, ſaid ſhe, reſuming her uſual ſweetneſs, that theſe flowers made me look very pretty; won't they, Madam, make you look pretty too? I wanted to make you as fine as you made me. Won't you let me dreſs your head? I could not help ſmiling at this queſtion; but upon her perſiſting in her requeſt, I at laſt conſented, and fancying nobody could poſſibly ſee me, reſolved to do as ſhe deſired, and afterwards lead her through the gar-

den, to divert my aunt and Amelia with her childish frolic. I therefore took a ribbon out of my pocket, and enamelling it with the brightest colours I could select from those she brought me, bound it round my head; when an impulse of curiosity made me hastily go nearer the brook to place it to advantage, and see how well it became me. Here I stay'd some time with my eyes fixed on the watery mirror, holding the beauteous child by her hand, and observing the different effects these fantastic ornaments had in the countenances of our shadowy images. I was now in a most gay and lively humour, and lifting up my eyes with a chearful smile, was going to propose our return home, when I was struck with the sight of a well dressed gentleman, who stood gazing upon us from the opposite bank, and who had doubtless been a witness of all my fooleries. Innocent as my amusement had been, I could not at first recover from the confusion and disorder this spectator gave me. However, I turned hastily, and taking hold of Miss Polly's hand, began to move towards the garden, at the same time pulling off my various coloured tiara, threw it to the ground; when the stranger having stood still for a moment, suddenly leaped from the opposite bank, hastened

after

after me, and ſeizing the hand that was at liberty, after a deluge of compliments, which diſcovered at leaſt his good breeding, conducted me home. My aunt immediately by her behaviour let me ſee that ſhe was far from being diſpleaſed with my companion; ſhe treated him with the utmoſt reſpect, yet endeavoured frequently to dive into his thoughts, by examining his countenance with a ſcrupulous and ſteady inſpection. She ſeemed to penetrate his very ſoul; not the leaſt geſture could eſcape her notice: yet ſhe was ſo cautious in theſe piercing regards, that it was impoſſible for him to obſerve them; and indeed her looks all the while expreſſed a ſatisfaction that let me ſee that whatever diſcoveries ſhe had made, they were far from being diſagreeable to her; for whenever my eyes met her's, I could eaſily diſcern an affectionate kind of joy, which ſeem'd to ariſe from the tender glow of a warm heart.

THE gentleman behaved all this while with the moſt perfect eaſe and freedom, and without appearing under the leaſt conſtraint by the old lady's preſence, entertained me with the confident freedom of an old lover, who thinks he has a right to our tenderneſs and reſpect. Nay, he told my aunt, even in my preſence,

the ſituation in which he found me; the manner in which he ſaid I attracted his eyes and heart; informed her of the minuteſt circumſtance relating to my behaviour; deſcribed the flowers which adorn'd my head; drew a compariſon between them, and (to uſe his own words) the more lovely and attractive beauties of my cheeks. Nor was my ſhape, my air forgotten; he took me for ſome deity; I could certainly be no leſs than one of the immortals. Here he diſcovered all the heathen mythology he had learnt at ſchool; proteſted that he miſtook me for Flora; and leſt I ſhould be too ſimple to underſtand the honour that was done me by this compariſon, told me, that ſhe was one of the moſt charming of all the goddeſſes; and could be equalled in beauty by none upon earth but me. In ſhort, he even offered to go himſelf and fetch the flowery wreath that ſo much became me; aſſured us, that the firſt moment he ſaw me, was the laſt of his liberty; and aſſerted, that if I would conſent to be his, he ſhould ever after our marriage oblige me to perpetuate the remembrance of that happy day, by wearing upon it a like blooming crown.

THUS he run on for a quarter of an hour together, without giving either my aunt or me

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an opportunity of ſpeaking a ſingle ſyllable; he was all life and gaiety, and attempted to divert me at the ſame time that he ſtrove to find a way to my heart. He thought it impoſſible that I ſhould be inſenſible to the force of flattery, and therefore attack'd my vanity with inceſſant praiſes. One moment he ſeemed melting in tenderneſs; but then immediately recovering himſelf, as dreading my taking an advantage of his weakneſs to uſe him ill, laugh'd at his own paſſion, and ſeeming to triumph over it, turn'd it into ridicule, with a vivacity accompanied with abundance of wit and humour. In ſhort, he is the moſt ſprightly unaffected creature you ever beheld; for even affectation in him muſt loſe its name; every thing is natural, genteel and eaſy.

BUT I had not been long in his company when my aunt, fancying that ſhe might poſſibly be a reſtraint to us both, took an opportunity to leave the room. However, his behaviour was ſtill the ſame, he ſmil'd and look'd grave; he ſigh'd, he laugh'd, he ſung a languiſhing ſtrain, the next moment hum'd a rigadoon, and capered about the room; but yet it was not difficult to diſcover, that tho' his temper naturally inclin'd him to be gay, it would have been now much more eaſy to him,

and doubtleſs more pleaſing too, to have aſſum'd a behaviour more agreeable to the ſituation of his heart. In ſpite of all his efforts, love ſtill had the maſtery, and methought his ſighs appeared much more genuine, than thoſe ſtarts of airy ſprightlineſs, under which he endeavoured to conceal them. He would have me conſider him as a lover, though he was unwilling to appear with the languiſhing tenderneſs of one that felt the full power of that paſſion. Yet in his very attempts to ſhew his liberty, he rattled his chains. I am ſure you would have laugh'd as heartily at his behaviour as I did; for indeed he is one of the moſt odd, fantaſtic, agreeable fellows, that ever aſſumed the tender name of a lover. But as I have given you Lucius's picture, you may expect that I ſhould give you his too; take it then as follows:

HE is pretty tall, and of the juſt mean between the too fat or too lean; his ſhape is genteel and eaſy; his air, that of a fine gentleman who has ſeen the world; his complexion fair, his fore-head large, his eyes brisk and full of fire; his noſe of a moderate ſize; his mouth rather too wide, but render'd agreeable by a conſtant ſmile which ſits on his lips and dimples in his cheeks; and as to his chin, I aſſure you,

you, it is not leſs regular than any other feature in his face. But I muſt not forget to mention his dreſs, which in this ruſtic part of the country appears very ſingular: every thing about him is of the neweſt faſhion; nor does he want any ornament to ſet off his perſon to advantage. This is an exact portrait of the gay, the janty, the confident Mellifont; and by the deſcription I have already given you of him, you will readily imagine that poor Lucius has a very formidable rival.

AFTER having diverted me for near two hours, with a thouſand agreeable extravagancies, he bid me adieu; but before he left the houſe, had a private converſation of ſome minutes with my aunt, who, as ſoon as he was gone, came to me; when ſeating herſelf in a chair cloſe to mine, ſhe told me with a ſmile, that the gentleman had been begging her leave to continue his viſits; that ſhe knew him to be of a good family, and poſſeſſed of an eſtate of three thouſand a year; and added, that if he was agreeable to me and was really as much in love as he pretended, ſhe thought I could not make a better choice. I reply'd with a great deal of truth, that however diverting his company had been, he had not yet made any impreſſion upon my heart, and that agreeable

as his levity might render him to other women, I could not help thinking that a laſting happineſs muſt be built upon a more ſolid foundation, than the airy flights of ſuch a giddy volatile temper. I muſt confeſs, Madam, ſaid I, that his perſon and behaviour would render his addreſſes acceptable to the far greater part of our ſex, who are perhaps too eaſily pleaſed with gay appearances. His confidence might in their opinion appear heroic, and carry along with it irreſiſtible charms; but I ſhall never think a man has any great degree of tenderneſs for me, while I have not the power to ſoften him too much for him to diſcover all his ſprightlineſs in my preſence. My aunt ſmiled at this reply, and only anſwer'd, That ſhe would not adviſe me to any thing contrary to my inclinations; and Amelia and Polly coming in at the ſame time, we dropt the ſubject.

I HAVE nothing further to add, than that I am,

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

Your moſt obedient Servant,

FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

I SHALL not pretend, my dear Charlotte, to decide whether the extraordinary aſſurance of Melliſont, or the diffidence of Lucius, is the moſt excuſable quality; they are both certainly very great foibles when carried to exceſs. But as confidence and folly are nearly allied, ſo modeſty is a weakneſs, if it ſuppreſſes a man's virtue, and hides it from the world; if it fetters his mind, and reſtrains his actions when he deſires to exert himſelf. But if Lucius appears even upon a ſuperficial view ſuperior to Melliſont, notwithſtanding the thick ſhade, which inſtead of ſhewing his merit to advantage, obſcures ſome of his brigheſt excellencies, how much more amiable muſt he appear than that gentleman, if it be conſidered that his good qualities are ſet in the moſt glaring and ſtriking light, and that his very follies are ſome of his greateſt perfections!

I TOLD you in my laſt, that Amelia's entring the room put an end to the converſation I had with my aunt upon the merit and fortune of Melliſont; but I forgot to add, that upon our telling my couſin of the viſit I had received from my gay ſpark, I perceived that ſhe chang'd

chang'd colour, and immediately her countenance, which at firſt had all the marks of eaſe and good humour, diſcovered the evident ſymptoms of a thoughtful diſturbance; nor ſhould I perhaps have called this circumſtance to mind, which I then took but little notice of, had not her behaviour ſince that time awakened my attention, and quickened my apprehenſion.

THO' her temper is naturally rather grave than ſprightly, yet I had always remark'd in her a moſt agreeable evenneſs of diſpoſition, a flow of ſerene and tranquil ſpirits, which gave an engaging chearfulneſs to her behaviour, and render'd her equally acceptable to others, and happy in herſelf; this was an obſervation, that her whole deportment had confirm'd, ever ſince I knew her; but now that placid ſerenity, which ſweetned our converſation, and greatly enhanced the pleaſures of our mutual friendſhip, ſeem'd interrupted; ſhe ſought for opportunities of being alone, and diſcover'd a reſerve, which I really thought her incapable of. I have had a viſit in form from Mellifont almoſt every day, ſince the date of my laſt. He comes in his coach, with a pompous equipage, and dreſſed with as much ſplendor, as if he had prepared to appear in the drawing-room on a birth-night, while every viſit

ſeems

ſeems to encreaſe poor Amelia's diſcontent, and coldneſs to me.

Two days ago as I was taking a turn in the garden, I found her ſeated in a penſive poſture in a painted alcove, at the end of an alley the moſt obſcure and retired. She ſeem'd loſt in thought, and leaning her head upon her hands, with both her elbows fix'd upon the table, was doubtleſs indulging ſome ſerious reflections; but whatever was the ſubject of her contemplations, the ruſling I made amongſt the leaves of ſome bows, which, for want of cutting, croſs'd the path, and which rebounded back as I forced my way thro' them, ſoon made her lift up her eyes; when coming towards me, My dear, cry'd I, you will think me, perhaps, guilty of ill manners, for being ſo rude as to intrude upon your ſolitude; but no matter; my affection for you gives me ſome right to your confidence, and therefore in the name of friendſhip, I deſire you will either make me as grave as yourſelf, or permit me the pleaſure of forcing you to partake of my gaiety. Come, let me know the cauſe of this change. ——— Some doleful ditty! ——— Some tender tale of love! ——— Come, come, out with it. Here taking hold of her hand, I began to lead her back to the alcove, when turning her head away, with an air of unaffected

unaffected coldneſs, ſhe gave a deep ſigh, and then begg'd that I would be ſo kind as to let her go, ſince ſhe was in an ill humour, and was very unwilling to infect me. Nay, Amelia, ſaid I, I have no right to detain you againſt your inclinations: I thought I might be ſo happy as to divert you. I hope you will not think an unſeaſonable attempt of this kind unpardonable. No, my dear, ſaid ſhe; you are extremely obliging; but as I ſhall be but a diſagreeable companion, I chuſe to retire. At this ſhe left me, when ſtanding ſtill for a moment, to think whither I ſhould ramble, I ſaw her returning. She begg'd pardon for her ill manners, and making ſome apologies, ask'd at laſt, How I liked Mellifont, and what I thought of his addreſſes? I laugh'd at her queſtion; and readily replied, that I thought him a much more agreeable companion than a lover. Nay, my dear Felicia, ſaid ſhe, with jealouſy in her eyes, don't diſſemble; are not you charm'd with his company? Not as a lover, I aſſure you, ſaid I; he is indeed one of the moſt agreeable impertinents I ever beheld; but, Why this queſtion? Have you any private intereſt in view, that you ask it? Come, be frank now, and if it will be any ſatisfaction to you, I here reſign all pretenſions to his heart.

heart. I ſhould be very glad of being excuſed from the trouble of receiving his viſits; though I can't deny, but there is a pleaſure attends the homages of a man of his humour and appearance; they ſooth our vanity, give us an air of importance, and flatter our prevailing deſire of making captives. But this is a very ill-natured pleaſure, reply'd Amelia, with ſome warmth; and I thought you had too much good ſenſe, as well as humanity, to indulge it at the expence of the eaſe and happineſs of a worthy gentleman: beſides it is dangerous ſporting with the tenderneſs of a man of ſuch merit; for while you hover round the flame, you may poſſibly burn your wings. No, never fear it, return'd I; I am in no danger, I aſſure you; but if he will pay his addreſſes to me, how can I prevent it? Am I anſwerable for his folly? I have uſed no arts to retain him; and indeed have been ſo far from indulging my pride at the expence of his peace, that I have endeavoured as much as poſſible to make him looſe all hope of obtaining my affection. Amelia's countenance now clear'd up, a riſing joy ſparkled in her eyes, and gave an agreeable flush to her cheeks; and, in ſhort, ſhe had all that air of eaſe and ſatisfaction which our looks commonly expreſs, when we feel our hearts

eaſed

of a burthen which diſtorts its tender fibres, and gives us the moſt racking pain; but preſently aſſuming an air of ſoftneſs, ſhe confeſſed with a low voice, (as if dreading, even in that retired place, a witneſs of her melting paſſion) that ſhe loved the dear engaging Mellifont; but ſhe had no ſooner eaſed her boſom of this important ſecret, than a ruſtic bluſh, with all the marks of a confuſion which ſprings from innocence and artleſs ſimplicity, overſpread her face, and made her hang down her head; but at laſt recovering herſelf, ſhe told me ſhe had ſeen Mellifont a few days before he paid me my firſt viſit; that ſhe was charm'd with his perſon; but did not perceive that he had made any extraordinary impreſſion on her heart, till ſhe found that he paid his addreſſes to me; when love, jealouſy and deſpair, contributed all their force to render her unhappy. She then aſk'd me with a ſmile, that demanded my confidence, If I was leſs ſenſible of the merit of Lucius, than ſhe of Mellifont? and told me, That ſuſpecting it while I was ſick, from the tender things I ſaid of him, ſhe ſent to let Marilla know, that if her brother had a real affection for me, it would be then imprudent to continue his viſits; and that having learnt from her friend, the violence of his paſſion, ſhe had

had uſed all her art to prevent giving him the uneaſineſs he might feel at finding me in the company of his rival. Senſible of the advantages I received from her prudent precaution, and reflecting that my aunt would probably, without her aſſiſtance to keep it ſecret, have been by this time fully convinced of my tenderneſs for Lucius, I return'd her my ſincereſt thanks. We then talk'd of his perfections, delightful ſubject! in which ſhe ſeemed to ſtrive to out do me, in giving him the praiſes due to his merit: while the reſerve, which for ſeveral days had ſubſiſted between us, now ending in a mutual open confidence, bound us cloſer to each other, by ſhewing her the folly of her groundleſs diſtruſt, and ſtrengthening and enlarging my eſteem for her, who in the midſt of her jealous fears, took care of my happineſs, and provided againſt the diſcovery of a ſecret, on the concealment of which all my future felicity depended. We embraced with the utmoſt affection; we made reciprocal promiſes of treating each other for the future without diſguiſe; the very appearance of which was now below the dignity of our friendſhip. Our hearts were to lie open, and not the leaſt circumſtance relating to the happineſs of each other concealed. What a pleaſing intercourſe

of

of tender paſſion! All jealouſy being now removed, ſhe ſtrove to encreaſe the ardor of my love for Lucius, by relating a thouſand circumſtances in his favour; while her praiſes gave me a delight infinitely ſuperior to any flattery beſtow'd upon myſelf. Wrapt up in the ſoft ſatisfaction ſhe gave me, I gratefully return'd the obligation, by mentioning all the agreeable things that could juſtly be ſaid of Meliſont, to which ſhe liſtened with equal eagerneſs, and the ſame exceſs of ſoothing pleaſure.

We now walk an hour every day to talk on the ſame ſubject; and I don't believe we either of us find our delight grow leſs by the repetition. Love is an inexhauſtible theme; it furniſhes our converſation with the moſt delicate, refined, and exquiſite ideas; it raiſes us above ourſelves, and not only inſpires an elevation of ſentiment, but gives us a very noble and ſublime manner of expreſſing what it dictates; ſo that were you to hear us on this melting ſubject, you would ſmile at our diction, and the tender cadence of our periods; and be much more ready to take us for a couple of theatrical heroines, rehearſing the parts of two languiſhing princeſſes, than for rural nymphs unaccuſtom'd to high flights and lofty ſtrains, whoſe only

only perfection conſiſts in being paſtoral lovers. Sometimes we walk for two minutes together in eloquent ſilence; then after a ſigh or two, ſtill more eloquent, we burſt into ſome moving complaint on the ſeverity of fortune, in making her love a perſon in wealth her ſuperior, and me a youth unbleſt with the advantages I enjoy.

THUS I employ the time of Lucius's abſence in a way moſt agreeable to that eſteem and affection I ſhall always have for him; while abſence, inſtead of removing the tender ſoftneſs of my heart, renders every thought of him ſtill dearer to me, and preſents him to my mind in every new charm which fancy or love can invent.

BUT I would not have you imagine, Madam, that we ſpend all our time in theſe uſeleſs lamentations; we have read novels, romances, and plays, and have therefore ſome notion of plots and ſtratagems; but I believe we were neither of us form'd for intrigue, ſince with all our induſtry we can't yet invent any method to procure me the company of my lover, that will not render us liable to ſuſpicion from my aunt. Beſides, Mellifont is a conſtant interruption to my happineſs by his perpetual viſits; for I can't reſolve to ſee Lucius at a time when we

we ſhould be ſo liable to be diſturbed by that intruder's preſence. His company on this account grows diſtaſteful to me; and it is with the utmoſt difficulty that I keep within the bounds of good manners. But I am afraid of diſobliging him, leſt he ſhould acquaint my father with his paſſion, which he would doubtleſs approve, and leſt my refuſing to gratify him in this particular, ſhould offend him ſo much as to make him croſs me in the deareſt intereſts of my heart. I am,

MADAM,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XIII.

MADAM,

NOT the cooling ſhade of ſome friendly bower, the fanning breeze of Zephyrs, or the agreeable freſhneſs of ſome limpid ſtream, could give greater delight to the laborious hind, ſcorched with the meridian ſun's too ardent beams, than I received from the news of your being already join'd by the moſt ſacred bonds to the

the gay, the tender Philario. May all your days be propitious! May blooming joys, ever opening with new delight, perpetuate your felicity! May his lordſhip's affection, inſtead of decreaſing with time, ripen into that ſoft eſteem, that tender complacency which are the natural attendants of love and merit, and the higheſt ſummit of all ſublunary happineſs! In ſhort, may you be bound to him with all that dignity of paſſion which is neceſſary to render him ever as dear to you as now; while love ſhall have the energy of religion; and inclination the force of every ſacred dictate!

You ſee, Madam, what an aukward creature I would have you. To dare to be happy is a thing ſo unfaſhionable, that it may poſſibly require ſome degree of reſolution to withſtand the ſhock of being thought that dull thing called a *fond wife*; but however unpolite it is to have any degree of affection ſubſiſt between thoſe who ought to have the greateſt, you have too much good ſenſe to be aſhamed of what muſt now not only be the eſſence of your happineſs, but your higheſt glory. How ſtrange is it, that a name, a mere ſound, and a ſound too to which we have no ſettled meaning, ſhould have ſuch an influence upon mankind, as to make them cancel all the engagements of duty, affection,

affection, and happineſs; and even forfeit all their hopes of a bliſsful futurity! what bewitching charm! what dire ſpell! what ſtrange enchantment is contained in the word *polite*, that it ſhould controul our very paſſions, and make us ſuffer greater pangs of ſelf-denial to become vicious, than would be ſufficient to raiſe us to the higheſt attainments of heroic virtue! to be thought *polite*, how many ladies affect vices they have not the leaſt inclination for, and are contented to be faſhionably miſerable? To be thought *polite*, an old fop, decrepid with years, will keep a miſtreſs, and have the inſolence to boaſt of a thouſand vices, which his years, one would think, exempted him from. To be thought *polite*, a man will contemn the too condeſcending affection of the ſtupid fool his wife, deſpiſe her eaſy virtue, and at the ſame time adore an impudent proſtitute, who tyrannizes over him, and inſults him with impunity. While a lady for the ſame reaſon (out of *politeneſs*) will abhor the nauſeous fond wretch her huſband. Thus a confuſed notion of *honour* (another word of the ſame kind, the letters of which I ſuppoſe are a kind of taliſman) will make a coward go trembling to deſtruction, and ruſh with horror into a dreaded eternity.

You will think this a very odd kind of a preamble to be addreſſed to a bride in all the blooming pride of youth and beauty; but if you conſider that we ought to lay down ſome principles to ſecure the continuance of our true felicity, you will not think it an inexcuſable piece of impertinence in me, to put you in mind, that if we ſhould enjoy any ſolid happineſs, we muſt be contented to diſſent from the maxims of the greateſt part of mankind; it is certain that we are govern'd more by ſounds than we are generally willing to imagine. ——— But I might have conſidered too, that your good ſenſe had undoubtedly directed you to make the ſame obſervation. But let that be as it will, I know I am ſecure of your pardon, for you are now in too happy a ſituation to be offended at any thing I can ſay, however common and trifling my thoughts.

To put an end to theſe grave remarks, I come to my own affairs: and firſt I ſhall tell you that I have lately had an interview with Lucius, in which I gave him an opportunity of indulging all the tenderneſs of his heart; a ſatisfaction that was procured me by the kind aſſiſtance of Amelia. Upon hearing a few days ſince of the neceſſities of an honeſt but indigent family, about a mile diſtant from my

aunt's, I reſolved to pay them a viſit, to indulge ſome of that ſublime pleaſure which it is the greateſt advantage of a large fortune to procure us. Amelia only was acquainted with this viſit; nor did I tell her of it till I was ready to ſet out, when I deſired her to accompany me, to which ſhe inſtantly conſented. We found the unhappy manſion ſituated at the foot of a hill, ſurrounded with ſeveral incloſures of orchards, paſture grounds, and corn fields: at the entrance leading to the door, was a ſhort walk between two elder hedges, which incloſed a ſmall kitchen garden, with ſome ſtacks of hay, and near the main building, ſome ſtables and barns. But every thing was in profound ſilence; for no human object was near, and nothing to be heard, but the warbling ſongs of the airy choriſters, who fluttered amongſt the hedges, or ſat making their reſponſes from the diſtant thorny brakes. The ſolitary ſtillneſs of the place, added to the reflection of the buſineſs in which I was employ'd, contributed to render me thoughtful, and I could not help giving ſome moments to the conſideration of the various unavoidable miſeries which attend human nature; miſeries which neither virtue nor prudence can always guard againſt. With a mind thus dipp'd in pity, I could

could not help hesitating a little when we came to the door; but at last, rapping softly, we entered the room, where despair and sorrow were painted in the strongest colours, and in every face such an undissembled sadness, as struck me to the very soul: for notwithstanding the relief I intended to give them, I could not forbear sharing in the general grief; and, indeed, it was with some pain that I assum'd an air of ease and chearfulness, in order to comfort a pretty boy who stood with his eyes fix'd upon his mother, and pulling her by the apron, cry'd at seeing her weep. Two other children, too young to take the same notice, were playing about the room: but where-ever I turn'd my eyes, every thing was in disorder; nor was it possible to cross the room, or take a chair, for the confused heap of litter which was every way strew'd about. Alas! the poor woman was in too deep affliction to attend to the management of her family; her mind too much discomposed to attend to trifles! or a violent distress almost always renders us inactive; it sinks and depresses the spirits, and when no visible assistance is in view, makes the unhappy incapable of thinking or using their natural abilities, in order to extricate themselves from the pressure of their difficulties.

THESE obſervations, Madam, I have learnt from my aunt, and have always found them agreeable to truth. At one of the windows ſat a young man, with deſpair in his eyes, and a look that diſcovered he was grown ſtupid with grief: a book of devotion lay open before him, on which his regards were fixed; but fixed in ſuch a ſteady manner, as ſhewed that he was incapable of reading: he pored on the ſame place, and neither his eyes nor his head moved to take in the compaſs of a line. As ſoon as we entered the room, the good woman aroſe from her chair, and appearing ſurpriſed at the ſight of ſtrangers of our appearance, ask'd our buſineſs, when taking the little boy into my arms, I wiped away his tears, and kiſſing his pretty roſy cheeks, told him I would wipe away his mother's too if I was able; at this he ſmil'd, when emptying ſome lumber out of a chair, while the mother made one ready for Amelia, we both ſat down. At a loſs how to introduce the cauſe of our viſit, and willing to oblige them in a way as little painful as poſſible, I ſeem'd mighty fond of the little creatures that were playing around me; then turning to the mother, deſir'd that ſhe would look upon us as her ſincereſt friends, and that we ſhould think it a pleaſure to ſerve her; but ſhe thank'd

me in a manner that ſhew'd that her hopes were at a low ebb, and too far ſunk to be rais'd by glimmering proſpects, and airy viſions. However, ſhe call'd her husband; but before he came Amelia aroſe, and leaving me to comfort the diſtreſſed as my humanity directed, elated with the agreeable ſurpriſe ſhe hoped to give me, went out with the ruſtic youth, and privately diſpatched him to Marilla, to let her know where we were, and that her company with her brother's would be acceptable to us both. Mean while the maſter of the houſe, with more firmneſs in his countenance, but with eyes drooping with care, came to us from a back room, and related the cauſe of his misfortunes, with that honeſt frankneſs and ſimplicity, which always affects the mind, tho' uttered in the moſt plain and homely language. He told me, That by the exceſſive rains, which had enriched the farmers of the neighbouring hills with ſeveral ſucceſſive years of plenty, he was reduced from a ſtate of affluence to penury and indigence; that he ſhould be oblig'd to ſell the plentiful crop that covered his lands to a vaſt diſadvantage to ſatisfy his landlord's demands; and that he had now no other proſpect than to looſe the fruit of his labours, to be turn'd out of all his poſſeſſions, and perhaps

haps, to glean the fields he himſelf had ſown; and all this for want of a ſmall ſum, which his landlord had now a particular occaſion for.—— Willing to ſhorten his uneaſineſs, I here interrupted him to know what ſum would remove his preſent anxiety, and as ſoon as he had inform'd me, I told him with a ſmile, that I thought myſelf very happy at having it in my power to give joy to an honeſt family, and at the ſame time emptied my purſe upon the table. I now felt my heart overflow with a ſympathetic extaſy, ariſing from the tranſports I myſelf had occaſion'd. Thus with a little gold that has long laid uſeleſs in my cheſt, and for which I have here no uſe, I have procured the happineſs of a whole family, and given myſelf a delight more exquiſite than I ever experienced from the like occaſion; ſince the advantage they have received from it (as they told me) may probably redound to their childrens children. What uſe could I poſſibly make of this hoarded pelf to procure me equal ſatisfaction? Or what is the pleaſure we receive from pride, the gratification of luxurious appetite, or the indulgence of the higheſt animal delight, compared to this luxury of the mind, the more natural rapture which reſults from the gratifications of our humanity? But while the good people were

loading

loading me with their bleſſings, I had the agreeable ſurpriſe of ſeeing Amelia enter the room, accompanied by Lucius and his ſiſter; for as they lived but at a ſmall diſtance from the farmer's, ſhe choſe to walk ſoftly after the young man in order to meet them, and to let them know that I was an entire ſtranger to the viſit ſhe requeſted from them. Seiz'd with a ſudden emotion, my heart fluttered with a painful joy, and throbb'd with a ſweet yet tumultuous extaſy. I haſtily aroſe, hardly having the power to ſtay to deſire my old friends to take no notice of what had paſs'd, and running to the door, in an eager tranſport embraced Marilla, at the ſame time ſhooting a glance at her dear brother. We went into the orchard together. We talk'd like friends who had not ſeen each other for a long time, full of ſpirit, full of affection; till at laſt, after having taken two or three turns, Amelia and Marilla telling me with a laugh, that they would leave me for a few minutes, and inſtantly ſtriking off to the moſt diſtant part of the orchard, ſeated themſelves under a tree, and by their abſence left room for a more delightful converſation; but tho' Lucius was now very ſenſible that he was dear to me, he could not enter upon the tender ſubject without confuſion; he at firſt enquir'd after my health;

complain'd that he was deny'd the pleaſure of ſeeing me, and then with a ſigh, let me know how much he thought himſelf oblig'd to Amelia for procuring him a ſatisfaction that he had ſo long languiſh'd for. But why, Sir, ſaid I, (willing to draw him to an explanation) do you complain of your being deprived of my company; is that ſuch a terrible misfortune? Yes, my dear Felicia, reply'd he, trembling and caſting down his eyes, it is an inſupportable misfortune. Did you but know, Madam, with what anguiſh I ſupport your abſence; with what cruel inquietudes I count the tedious minutes; while my heart, (here he pauſed, unable to proceed, while every joint quivered with fear, but at laſt reſuming) while my heart ſtruggles to be near you; were you ſenſible of that tumult of paſſion, and all thoſe nameleſs dear ſenſations which fill my breaſt, O Felicia! your wonder would ceaſe, and you would rather be ſurpriſed, that any conſideration could prevent my flying to you? His embarraſment now ſeem'd to encreaſe, while he waited for my anſwer, and indeed I was going to endeavour to rally him on his pretended Platonic friendſhip; to endeavour I ſay, for I am ſadly afraid, I ſhould have made but an odd appearance with my affected gaiety; for my heart

was

was too much ſoften'd to permit me to laugh at him; however one touching glance chang'd my reſolution, and oblig'd me to behave more naturally; that is, to thank him for what was ſo perfectly agreeable to me. I am obliged to you, Sir, ſaid I, for that deep concern you expreſs for me; but were I more ſenſible that I deſerved it, I might give greater credit to what you tell me; however I can do no leſs than thank you for your complaiſance. Ah! Madam, returned he with more reſolution, (while a darting joy flushed in his cheek, and in a moment mingled an air of delight amidſt the tender languiſhment of his countenance) you merit ſufficiently authoriſes the ardor of my paſſion. I feel the force of your charms, they run thro' my heart, and captivate every thought; but chief that amiable virtue, that ſanctity of manners, and all thoſe dear unutterable graces, which perpetually bloſom with freſh beauties and undecaying charms, fill my raviſh'd ſoul, and inſpire a tender admiration and diſtant awe.

You ſee, Madam, that theſe ſilent lovers, (who are ſtruck dumb with a guſh of paſſion too ſoft and powerful to be expreſſed) have their tongues no ſooner unlock'd, than they burſt into heroics, and talk as differently from the

polite gentlemen of the more ſtubborn mold who have language at command, as if they were another ſpecies of beings. Here the heart ſays every thing, and dictates not only the words, but the minuteſt glance, and the leaſt motion: every feature has a voice, and the whole man proclaims the power of love. For my part I freely confeſs that flattery never appeared half ſo charming as it did now. A ſweet enthuſiaſm poſſeſſed all my ſoul, and I could not help thinking how much better this dear man deſerved a compliment of this kind than myſelf. But the next thought gave a bitter daſh to this exultation of heart, and made me reply in a mild tone; You are much too blame to entertain ſuch romantic ſentiments of me; which, I aſſure you, I have not vanity enough to think I deſerve: but however, were I ever ſo worthy of your eſteem, and tendereſt affection, yet the thought that I am not at my own diſpoſal, and the difficulty you may expect to meet with from my father, who has an undoubted right to diſpoſe of me, ſhould make you endeavour to forget me, and conquer a paſſion which I fear will prove fatal to your repoſe. This anſwer gave an immediate damp to his tranſport, and ſeem'd to throw him into a freſh confuſion; however, fixing his eyes upon me,

me, with a languid yet piercing air, O my dear Felicia, cried he, do you indeed blame the unconquerable tenderneſs of my heart? Would you perſuade me to eraſe your lovely image from my ſoul? Alas! I am too ſenſible that I have no reaſon to flatter myſelf, that your father will ever favour my aſpiring wiſhes, yet whatever is the conſequence, I muſt love you ſtill —— I muſt ever love you. Nor can I, tho' ſurrounded with difficulties that oppoſe my happineſs, even wiſh that I loved you leſs. But ah! Madam, if you deſire that I ſhould forget you, I am wretched indeed!

WITH what irreſiſtable ſoftneſs were theſe laſt words uttered! his eyes ſwell'd with a ſtarting tear, which with conſcious dignity and ſhame he endeavour'd to call back, as a mark of a too effeminate weakneſs. Every ſpeaking feature deſcrib'd the ſtrong emotions which agitated his ſoul with all the torturing agonies that can ariſe from the tendereſt deſpair, while pity and love, and dear compaſſion ſhot through my heart, and filled all my mind with a virtuous and decent ſoftneſs. I look'd upon him; but what did this look tell him? Certainly all that I felt; for my eyes were then incapable of ſpeaking a falſhood, And oh! Lucius, ſaid I, need I tell you, that I am far from wiſhing

it in your power to forget me? yet methinks if that was neceſſary to your happineſs, I could ſuffer a great deal to procure it; and perhaps a conqueſt of this kind would not coſt me leſs than it would you. Could you but procure my father's conſent, we might both be happy ——— but that I fear you will never obtain. ——— No; neither you nor I ought to hope for it. ——— and I here proteſt that I will never be your's without his approbation. ——— Not even your merit, great as it is, ſhall ever make me forget that I have a father ——— a kind and indulgent father ——— never ſhall any conſideration prevail with me to forfeit my duty to God, or to him. This reſolution you will not ——— you cannot condemn. No, my dear dear Felicia, return'd he, with his eyes ſparkling with a languid joy; my love is too pure to ſuffer me either to involve you in your father's diſpleaſure, or to tempt you to offend heaven: ſo far from laying ſnares for your virtue and honour, I would die in their defence, and ſacrifice all that is dear to me, to preſerve them inviolate. But O what tranſporting goodneſs! do you indeed love me? ——— Is it poſſible? ——— Help me to ſupport the rapture of this extatic thought ——— or rather teach me how to merit your father's favour. ———

What

What means would not I employ to obtain it? —— Sure if he is ſuch a tender father as you deſcribe him, he muſt have ſome regard to your inclinations in an affair of ſuch infinite conſequence to your happineſs. But oh this diſproportion of fortune! —— that is the obſtacle. —— And can there be a greater in the opinion of a tender parent? —— Yes, ſure, to a wiſe and tender parent there may.

BUT, Madam, I muſt not forget to mention one circumſtance that I am ſure will make you ſmile. In the height of his rapture he ſeized my hand, and ſqueezing it with a ſtrong and ſudden graſp, hurt my fingers ſo that I could hardly forbear crying out; I am ſure if he had obſerved my looks, he would have found that I made moſt frightful faces: he then preſſed it to his lips, and taking it from thence, graſp'd my poor fingers again with the ſame convulſion of paſſion, till ſlackening the tender preſſure as his thoughts return'd to my father, he at laſt held my hand ſo looſe that my numm'd fingers could ſcarcely feel that he held them at all. But a ſhame on my extreme ſenſibility, that gave occaſion to theſe intollerable extaſies! What tender words had I uttered! dear Madam, let no prudes or coquettes ever read my letters, for I ſhall certainly never be able to ſtand the

the cenſure of the one, or the raillery of the other. But to proceed:

MELTING with the high-wrought rapture, which ſeem'd to ſublime our ſouls, while it raiſed us to a degree of felicity almoſt too exquiſite to be ſupported, we mutually open'd our hearts, and with a confidence of being beloved, reciprocally confeſſed the tender ſenſations that ſwell'd our boſoms. All *my* ſoul was delight! A delight pure as the rapture of ætherial ſpirits! *his*, tranſporting extaſy!

" *'Tis not the coarſer tie of human laws,*
" *Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,*
" *That binds our peace, but harmony itſelf,*
" *Attuning all our paſſions into love;*
" *Where friendſhip full exerts his ſofteſt*
" *power;*
" *Perfect eſteem and ſympathy of ſoul,*
" *Thought meeting thought, and will preventing*
" *will,*
" *With boundleſs confidence: for nought but*
" *love*
" *Can anſwer love, and render bliſs ſecure.*

THOMSON.

BUT loſt in this charming intercourſe of ſouls, we forgot that it was time to depart, till

my

my couſin with an unwelcome intruſion, and more unwelcome meſſage, came to put us in mind that the ſun was ſetting, and that it was time to return home; when with reluctant hearts, after bidding a tender adieu, and embracing Marilla, I tore myſelf from them, and haſtened back with Amelia to my aunt.

You, I hope, Madam, will excuſe the weakneſs I ſo freely confeſs to you; ſoftened by the ſcene of diſtreſs I had juſt been a witneſs of, the unexpected preſence of my dear Lucius had probably a much greater effect than it would have had, if my mind had not been thus previouſly intendered. However, nothing can enoble the ſoul like a virtuous paſſion. It inſpires a thouſand delicacies, a thouſand virtues, which, without it, we ſhould certainly have no idea of.

I AM, Madam, with my ſincereſt reſpects to his lordſhip, and my moſt ardent prayers for the continuance of your mutual happineſs,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

Moſt obedient Servant,

FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MADAM,

THO' your impatience to hear from me is very obliging, yet it lays me under a neceſſity of entertaining you with abundance of impertinences; but if trifles can entertain you have no reaſon to be diſſatisfied. Wrapt up in obſcurity, I hear nothing of the fate of princes, or the fall of contending nations. I have now no ambition to enquire after ſuch important events: an humble ſwain engroſſes all my attention, tho I hardly ever ſee him. I converſe with few beſides the people of the groves, who (pretty warblers!) are my conſtant companions; yet you would have me inceſſantly writing. Upon my word, Madam, you are quite unreaſonable. I can hardly think it poſſible that a month's ſilence can give you all this impatience. But your friendſhip is an excuſe that I muſt admit. I therefore leave the rooks and daws, which with their harſh diſcordant pipes, aid the concert of the warbling linnet, the thruſh, the wood-lark, who prodigal of harmony, run thro' their wild variety of notes. Nor ſhall the roſy-breaſted-robin, emblem of innocence! the mellow bull-finch, or the dy-

ing

ing cadence of the high-ſoaring ſongſter of the ſky, nor all the wing'd choriſters, who chant their loves, and in " fluttering courtſhip pour " out their little ſouls in mellifluous num- " bers", prevent my being impertinent when you command it.

My mind is now in an unaccountable ſituation, ſtrangely divided between hope and fear, and toſſed with a variety of contending paſſions. Still teazed with the addreſſes of Mellifont, his company becomes every day more inſupportable; his vanity grows inſufferable, and the very means he employs to inſinuate himſelf into my eſteem, heightens my averſion. Not that he is really a diſagreeable companion; but while he is a perpetual obſtacle to my ſeeing Lucius, it is no wonder if his gayeſt flights, humorous and diverting as they may appear to others, only ſerve to encreaſe my ſpleen and heighten my diſguſt. The conſideration that his unwelcome intruſion deprives me of that dear and ſoftening pleaſure I ſhould otherwiſe enjoy from the cordial glances, and all the pleaſing intercourſes of love that might paſs between Lucius and me, poiſons the ſatisfaction I ſhould otherwiſe receive from his ſprightly airs: airs that have not the leaſt conformity

with

with the tenderly penſive diſpoſition of my mind.

ONE day laſt week being diſturb'd with abundance of gloomy reflections, all turning upon the abſence of my lover, and the oppoſition I expect to meet with from my father, Mellifont glided into the room with a dancing ſtep and his uſual aſſurance, and an affectation of all that eaſe and negligence of behaviour, that can only ſpring from a mind entirely ſatisfied with itſelf. He ſung *Roſy-Bowers*, humm'd an Italian air, and every minute digreſſed from the ſong, either to make application to me, or to utter ſome tender thing which intruded upon his thoughts; but every thing was expreſſed with ſuch a mixture of the ſoft and the ridiculous, as would have forced a ſmile from any one that had leſs reaſon to be melancholy. But I was too perverſe to be moved by his fantaſtic behaviour, to ſhew even by my looks the leaſt mark of approbation.

DEAF to the muſic of his voice, which is really very harmonious, and untouched by all his arts to charm me, he inſenſibly became more grave, when laying aſide his frolic airs, Will nothing ſatisfy you, my charmer, ſaid he, unleſs you ſee me ſighing at your feet? Would you have me in dull languiſhment admire your

your beauties, and with a heavy ſobbing heart tell you all my pain? Well, Madam, I confeſs myſelf your ſlave; but at the ſame time beg, that, cruel as you are, you will not triumph in your conqueſt, and inſult over the victim of your charms.

HERE he threw himſelf upon his knee, and taking one of my hands, which he tenderly preſſed in his, See, my dear, ſaid he, as great a conqueſt as ever love has made. In vain I have ſtruggled to regain my liberty. All my wiſhes center in you; I love you with all the paſſionate ſoftneſs that can fill a human breaſt: as tenderly as — as — Nay, Madam, for heaven's ſake don't laugh at me, continued he ſeeing me ſmile; but tell me ſincerely now, don't I look very ſilly. I ſigh like the fam'd knight-errants of old, and like them bending before the divine object of my ſublimeſt wiſhes, beg, O thou adorable fair, that thou wilt mitigate the ſeverity of my unhappy deſtiny, or ſuffer me to expire at your feet. Here making a pauſe, he gently ſunk his head upon my lap; when ſnatching away my hand, and precipitately ariſing, he could not prevent his falling upon the floor. Not all my melancholy could now prevent my laughing, had I not endeavour'd to hinder it in order to carry on

this

this comic ſcene. Lie there, cried I, thou unworthy knight, nor ever more appear before me, till thou bringeſt me the heads of thoſe ſavage monſters that infeſt the woods, the trophieſt of thy proweſs and renown. At this I flung out of the room, as if in a mighty paſſion, and ſtepping into the thickeſt part of the garden, indulged for a few minutes the burſt of laughter, which I with difficulty retain'd till I was out of his hearing.

How dreadfully afraid is poor Mellifont of my abuſing the power I have over him! he was juſt diſſolving in ſoftneſs; but in the moment when he was giving way to his paſſion, and throwing aſide his ſprightlineſs, which was now become unnatural, a ſmile recalled back his fears; his dread of my tyranny return'd, and to prevent my taking advantage of his weakneſs, he was willing to turn all he had ſaid into ridicule.

HOWEVER, when I began to reflect a little, I could not help being afraid that I had affronted him by my ill-manners in leaving him ſo abruptly, and therefore having now been near an hour in the garden, and imagining he was gone, return'd to my aunt, in order to make my excuſes to her; to whom I fancied he had complained, and who, probably would blame me

for carrying the jeſt too far. But in my way ſtepping into the room where I had left him upon the floor, I found my doughtly knight ſtrutting about with an old ruſty helmet on his head, and in his hand a pike, which ſerved for a ſpear, upon which was fixed the head of a fox, which he had luckily run down the day before. When ſtamping with his foot, his truſty 'ſquire enter'd with the ſtuffed ſkins of ſeveral badgers, and other beaſts of prey, the ſpoils of his hall, when Mellifont bending one knee, laid them at my feet, and reſting upon his ſpear, See, fair princeſs, ſaid he, bowing low his head, a knight renown'd for acts of chivalry, who lays at your divine feet the ravagers of the mountains and the vallies, but lower ſtill he would lay his heart. Incomparable lady, you ſee a ſlave whoſe magnanimous arm has made theſe horrid monſters tremble; yet his life depends on the radiance of your ſmiles. Soften then with pity the beams of your eyes, leſt their lightning, with too refulgent glory, ſhould burn his ſhrivelled heart to cinders.

THIS ſet ſpeech which he uttered with the utmoſt gravity and ſolemnity, he had doubtleſs ſtudied before I entered the room, and which he concluded with bending low to kiſs

my

my feet; when ſtruggling againſt a ſmile, I aſſum'd an air of inexorable ſternneſs, and looking down upon him with a lofty ſuperiority and contempt, Avaunt, caitif vile, cried I, and think not to abuſe my ears with thy audacious forgeries. Are theſe, wretch, the trophies of thy valour! where are the diſtreſſed virgins that thou haſt delivered from the poiſonous talons of fiery dragons, or the dreadful gripe of monſtrous giants. Fly, coward, and attempt not to abuſe my credulity with the carcaſſes of inſects, or my weak arm ſhall chaſtiſe thy temerity. Here I turn'd haſtily from him, and walking with a majeſtic ſtateliness ſeated myſelf at the other end of the room, in an eaſy chair, with as much dignity as if it had been a chair of ſtate. But I had no ſooner turn'd my back, than throwing away his masking ornaments, he ſtepp'd up to me, ſinging, "Why do you fly, my deareſt," and immediately dropping his ſong, Don't you think, Madam, cried he, that we have acted our parts to perfection? upon my word, you do every thing with a grace. Your every air is charming. I only am defective; for I find, I ſhall do no wonders in the character of a redoubted champion for love; ſince after all my endeavours, I have been ſhamefully degraded, and

caſt from the dignity of my ſublime ſtation. Yet, Madam, you are ſenſible it was in diſguiſe that you made me a convert to love; adorned like Flora with all the blooming graces of the ſmiling year, and incircled with the united fragrance of every opening flower, you captivated all my ſenſes, and inſtantly made me that odd creature, called a whining, ſighing lover. Upon my word, Madam, you could not have made a ſtranger metamorphoſis had you fix'd me a ſtatue. Here he pauſed, but inſtantly recollecting himſelf, O Madam, cried he, ſmiling and rubbing his hands, I have a lucky thought; permit me to aſſume another diſguiſe; as you firſt appeared to me a goddeſs, let me for once be diſguiſed like a god; you ſhall receive me crown'd with ivy, and the glowing cluſters of the ſwelling vine. In this appearance who knows what wonders I may perform! Beſides, can any thing better expreſs the felicity that would, I am ſure, ariſe from our union, than an emblem of that paradiſe, where the ſoft beauties of the opening year ſhall be blended with the yellow fruits of autumn, and all the charms of the luxuriant flowing bowl. In what exquiſite happineſs ſhould we ſpend our days; you ever blooming; I, like Bacchus, ever frolic, gay and ſprightly.

No,

No, no, Sir, ſaid I the ſeaſons may take their courſe for me; nor will I have any thing to do with your drunken god-ſhip. I therefore beg it as a favour that I may not be diſturbed with ſuch fooleries, which are very diſagreeable to me. I had hardly uttered theſe words when with the utmoſt ſurpriſe I ſaw Lucius and Marilla enter the room; but it was a ſurpriſe accompanied with delight. I view'd his looks with conſcious innocence, while no ſuſpecting fear dim'd his eyes, nor wan jealouſy diſcolour'd his cheek. While I was embracing Marilla, Lucius and Mellifont met each other with the freedom of perſons who had been long acquainted, and turning to me, I have heard, ſaid he, that you are to have a little diverſion, and if it is not over, would be glad to have a part in it. Hail! noble knight, cry'd he, clapping Mellifont on the ſhoulder, what mighty feat of arms is to be done with your helmit and lance? Mellifont ſeem'd here a little confuſed, while I began to fear that my lover was acquainted with the paſſion of his rival; but examining again his countenance, my uneaſineſs vaniſhed; for it had not the leaſt tincture of diſorder. But finding that Mellifont made no reply, Come, my friend, no evaſions, rejoin'd he, I met your ſervant an hour ago, running

home with all poſſible ſpeed, and in ſuch haſte that he had hardly time to tell me the whimſical meſſage you had given him, to ſtrip your hall of its grim ornaments, and to bring them here with thoſe ruſty pieces of ancient heroiſm your helmet and lance. And the lady of this houſe, doing my ſiſter and I the honour to deſire our company, I came fill'd with the hopes of ſeeing ſome of your diverting extravagances.

HERE Mellifont, aſſuming a chearful air, began the relation of the odd piece of Quixotiſm which he had carried on with ſuch humour, and my aunt and Amelia coming in, could not help joining with Lucius and Marilla, in frequently interrupting him, by burſting into a general laugh; and indeed it was impoſſible for any one in the company to forbear. For tho' the ſtory was comical enough of itſelf, yet the ſevere manner in which he laſh'd himſelf, with the romantic reflections he made upon his diſgrace, render'd it infinitely more extravagant: Nor indeed is it poſſible to give you any idea of this part of our diverſion, except I could give you the varied tone of his voice, his looks, his air, and his minuteſt geſture.

THE evening was ſpent with abundance of gaiety, while Lucius's good ſenſe, and Mellifont's agreeable vivacity, furniſh'd great part of

our entertainment. Nor were ſome of thoſe ſoft and refin'd pleaſures wanting, which I now find make up the moſt exquiſite part of human happineſs. 'Tis true, I could not enter into a particular converſation with my lover, much leſs indulge the innocent ſatisfaction of a private interview; but yet I ſat near him, and methought my heart beat in that ſituation, much more freely than when he was far diſtant. My ſoul itſelf was all harmony! and inſpired by his preſence, every vein was harmony too. Strange! that the mind can be ſenſible of ſuch delight from only a conſciouſneſs of a dear object's being near! what magnetic influence, what attractive power is in the perſon beloved, that from a circumſtance ſo ſmall can inſpire ſuch tender joys, ſuch delicate ſenſibilities of happineſs? 'Tis, true I ſaw him with pleaſure, I heard him with pleaſure too; but yet I had an additional delight, more conſtant and uniform, from my being conſcious that I was near him, which every ſeat farther from him would have ſenſibly decreaſed. You, Madam, can perhaps account for theſe pleaſing emotions; and I deſire you would let me know if you think it unreaſonable, that upon theſe occaſions there ſhould be ſome ſecret ſympathies, ſome dear inexpreſſible ways, by which ſouls expand themſelves

themſelves towards the dear perſon, and join in a ſoft etherial embrace. I know you will laugh at this whimſical conceit; but no matter. The evening, I ſay, was ſpent agreeably, tho' we were obliged to be very cautious in our looks, to prevent ſuſpicion; and indeed I was quite ſparing in mine, for I ſeldom indulged the pleaſure of examining his countenance. A precaution that was now abſolutely neceſſary. However, might I frequently enjoy Lucius's company in the ſame manner, I ſhould be more contented; but hardly ever to ſee him, and at the ſame time to have no proſpect of having the difficulties removed, which obſtruct this happineſs, I freely confeſs, is more than I am well able to bear. I am afraid of having our mutual paſſion diſcovered, I tremble with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions for fear it ſhould come to my father's ears; and yet without this ſhould be the caſe, it will for ever continue impoſſible for me to taſte any true felicity.

O MY dear friend, if my happineſs is really dear to you, give me your advice, and teach me if poſſible to unite my duty to my father, with the tender ſentiments I feel for Lucius, and to make them both ſubſervient to the higheſt pleaſure I can enjoy on earth. By what means ſhall I attack my father's heart? By

what means ſhall Lucius procure his favour, and make him ſenſible of his merit? To effect this will be a task hard and difficult, and to have a ſhare in promoting my happineſs, will be an employment worthy of your friendſhip, and the moſt endearing proof you can poſſibly give me of your eſteem and affection. With the ſincereſt and moſt tender reſpect, I am

YOUR LADYSHIP'S
Moſt obedient Servant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XV.

IS it poſſible, Madam, that you can really give me ſuch advice? What, to forget my dear father! to ſteel my heart againſt the ſoft impreſſions of filial duty! to be inſenſible of the ſtrong and tender ties of nature, of the affectionate cares his heart has felt for me, and all thoſe numberleſs inſtances of paternal kindneſs which I have ſo often received from him! Shall I throw a cloud over the flattering proſpects he has rais'd for me, and diſappoint all his fond views for my happineſs, by caſting

caſting off that right which nature, and the much more prevailing force of tenderneſs and love, have given him over me! No, Madam, I ſhall never be guilty of ſuch ingratitude. I will never diſpoſe of myſelf without his conſent; nor ſhall all your arguments, how plauſible ſoever, prevail with me to give him a minute's uneaſineſs.

PARDON the freedom with which I reject your propoſal; you never knew what it was to have a parent, and therefore can have but faint ideas of that ſollicitude, that unweared concern which employ their thoughts; much leſs can you be ſenſible of the unſpeakable obligations I am under to mine, the beſt of parents! and the beſt of father's!—But ſure I am miſtaken; you muſt have very ſtrong ideas of paternal tenderneſs to ſay, that however offended he may be at firſt, affection will ſoon take place of reſentment, and at laſt ſwallow up all thought of diſpleaſure; when his eyes will be open to the merit of Lucius, and he may be poſſibly be brought even to approve of our union. A reconciliation which you kindly promiſe to uſe your utmoſt endeavour to procure for us. But ah! my dear friend! can I preſume on that affection which makes him dear to me? Can I offend him, from the thought that he is far

from deſerving ſuch uſage from me? And can I diſclaim his authority and counſel, from the reflection that he deſerves all my confidence, and my moſt grateful and affectionate regards? No, my dear, you muſt excuſe me, your friendſhip blinds your judgment, and makes you give me advice that you would be far from taking yourſelf, were you in my circumſtances. You would then have conſidered the vexation that muſt ariſe from a diſappointment of the fondeſt hopes, the juſt provocation of ſeeing goodneſs abus'd, and the painful mixture of anger and love, ariſing in the mind of an indulgent father, as the greateſt evils; nor could you, I am ſure, think of being the cauſe of all theſe dreadful perturbations without ſtarting back, and inſtantly recoiling into duty.

YOUR ladyſhip finds now, what a troubleſome perſecution your kindneſs brings upon you: inſtead of acknowledging your goodneſs, and thanking you for the obliging concern you expreſs for my happineſs, I have been haranguing for I don't know how long on my duty to my ever-honour'd pappa, in order to let you ſee what a good girl I am. But don't be offended, Madam, I have only been anticipating your own thoughts on the rights of parents. You will ſoon be of my mind; and a few months

months hence, I hope, will be able to write on this ſubject with a much better grace than I can pretend to do; ſince you will then, it is likely, find abundance of thoſe tender cares, thoſe dear undeſcribable ſollicitudes ariſing in your heart, which I form but a diſtant idea of, from the impreſſions I have received from the paternal affection of one of the beſt of fathers.

THE generous pity you expreſs for Melliſont, proceeds undoubtedly from your humanity and natural goodneſs; but I find this pity does not deprive you of the pleaſure of diverting yourſelf with the oddneſs of his behaviour; and the ridiculous manner in which he pays me his addreſſes; but I am going to ſurpriſe you by letting you ſee that he is no longer to be pitied, ſince he is in a fair way of regaining his liberty; or at leaſt of falling into a more ſupportable bondage.

IF you remember, Madam, I gave you in one of my letters on account of the concealed paſſion Amelia entertain'd for this gay ſpark of mine; but hopeleſs as it then appeared, the engaging ſoftneſs of her behaviour, and the natural ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition, added to that eaſy, unaffected freedom, and artleſs innocence which attends every thing ſhe does, ſeem at

length to have made an impreſſion on him. But you could never gueſs from whom I received this news ——— from Lucius, Madam. He made his rival his confidant. And here follows the letter I have juſt received from him on this occaſion.

" LOVELY FELICIA,

" DELIGHTFUL as the reflection of " your goodneſs is, while I indulge the " tranſporting remembrance of that charming " air with which you frankly confeſſed the " tender regard you ſhould always have for " my happineſs; ——— you love! you re- " turn my paſſion! what an extatic thought! " yet it cannot enable me to ſupport the tedi- " ous delay, the painful abſence, the tortur- " ing ſuſpenſe, and the pleaſing yet dreadful " mixture of hope and fear with which I wait " to know that ſentence from your father, " which muſt confirm me bleſt beyond expreſ- " ſion, or throw the thickeſt gloom over all " my joys. ——— O my dear! with what ar- " dor do I long to ſee you! I have a thouſand " things to ſay.

" YESTERDAY my friend Mellifont came " to ſee me, with an air more thoughtful " than ſeemed conſiſtent with his ſprightly vo-

" latile

" latile temper; when our friendſhip, which
" began very early, and which upon his late
" return from the tour of Europe, has been
" revived with all its warmth, engaged me to
" preſs him to communicate the cauſe of his
" diſcontent. He told me, that that was the
" deſign of his viſit, and propoſing our going
" into my ſtudy, where we might be ſe-
" cure from interruption, began there a ſtory
" which fill'd my mind with every wild agita-
" tion. It is with ſhame, ſaid he, that I con-
" feſs my weakneſs, I love Felicia. ——O
" what a ſtab did theſe words give me! his
" wealth, his form, his wit, his humour,
" with every qualification capable of charming
" the fair, ruſh'd upon my mind, and gave me
" the firſt pangs of jealouſy; tormenting paſ-
" ſion! but recollecting that he was certainly
" ignorant of my being his rival, I endeavour-
" ed to arm myſelf with patience: he then
" enumerated your ſeveral perfections, and
" dwelt upon your charms, while every com-
" mendation encreaſed my diſquiet: O Ma-
" dam, can you forgive my unjuſt fears?—
" fears injurious to your honour —— but
" while I made the compariſon between him
" and myſelf, how was it poſſible to help be-
" ing alarm'd, ſince I myſelf muſt have juſti-

" fied your choice in rejecting me for him!
" But theſe fears were ſhort-lived and tranſi-
" ent, they ſoon gave way to a healing joy,
" which compoſed the impetuous tumult of
" my ſoul; and with the utmoſt delight I
" heard him add, Yet you wou'd admire, Lu-
" cius, to ſee how cold, how inſenſible ſhe
" is of all my endeavours to pleaſe her. I meet
" with nothing but perfect indifference. Her
" very looks ſpeak her inſenſibility.——Ah!
" had ſhe but half the winning ſoftneſs, the
" tender graces of Amelia! —— but ſhe is
" incapable of ſoftneſs —— but don't you
" think Amelia pretty near as beautiful as Fe-
" licia? —— It muſt be confeſs'd however,
" that this lady has a much more agreeable
" temper. —— What a pleaſing air! what a
" charming ſimplicity! — Don't you think
" it would pique Felicia's pride to ſee me
" change the object of my homage, and pay
" thoſe aſſiduous addreſſes to her couſin, which
" ſhe with ſo much ſcorn contemns? — It is
" a pleaſing thought, and I am reſolved to
" puniſh this haughty beauty, by letting
" her ſee that it is now out of her power to
" render me that whining ridiculous fellow
" ſhe endeavours to make of me. Tell me
" now, Lucius, am I not in the right? They

" are both ladies of extraordinary merit, reply'd " I with the utmoſt calmneſs; but you ought " not to impute Felicia's diſlike to a want of " natural goodneſs; pray, Melliſont, is it ſuch " a crime to be blind to your perfections? She " would doubtleſs approve of you as a friend, " tho' not as a lover: and I think I know her " well enough to affirm, that ſo far from be- " ing offended at your transferring your af- " fections to her couſin, ſhe will uſe her en- " deavours to promote your mutual felicity. " Do you think ſo? return'd he; then I am " reſolved to try the experiment. I have found " ſomething ſo engaging in Amelia's behavi- " our, while I paid my addreſſes to her couſin, " that I have long looked upon her with the " higheſt eſteem; ſhe pleaſes without deſign, " and does the moſt trifling actions with ſuch " a grace, that they forcibly inſinuate them- " ſelves into the heart. It is, I am ſure, in " her power to make me happy. I endeavour'd " to fix this reſolution, and after ſeveral other " things being ſaid on the ſame ſubject, he " took leave, with a firm intention of tranſ- " ferring all his tender ſentiments to Amelia.

" O MY dear Felicia! tell me what I muſt " think of myſelf for this behaviour. What " judgment will you form of it? Sure it cannot

" offend you! You are too artleſs to diſſem-
" ble either with him or me. But however,
" I beg to ſee you, and with the moſt affectio-
" nate ardor entreat you to give me an oppor-
" tunity of expreſſing my gratitude, and tel-
" ling you how much I am,

DEAREST CREATURE!

Your obliged and
affectionate Servant,
LUCIUS.

As ſoon as I had read this letter, I left my chamber, and made haſte to communicate it to Amelia, who I did not queſtion would be highly pleaſed with the contents; but to my no ſmall ſurpriſe, as well as ſatisfaction, I found her engag'd in a cloſe converſation with Melliſont; ſo returning to my apartment, ſcrawled over the above in order to ſend it away by this night's poſt. I have hardly time now to thank you in form for your many favours, and therefore with my moſt affectionate prayers for the uninterrupted continuance of your felicity, in haſte ſubſcribe myſelf,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S
Moſt obliged Friend,
FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

LAST week, my dear friend, I inform'd you that the gay and janty Mellifont, finding himſelf unable with all his airs to ingratiate himſelf ſo far into my eſteem, as to prevail with me to liſten with pleaſure to his addreſſes, was ſo poor a hero as to change his miſtreſs, and direct his ſmiles and ſighs to Amelia, a thing which however common in real life, is ſeldom or never heard of in romance; yet this inſtance of his prudence, ſo far from alarming my pride, is a conſtant ſource of ſatisfaction and joy. And if you have yet read over my letter, you muſt have obſerved too, that I told you I left them together while I wrote you an account of this change in my affairs.

As ſoon as he was gone, Amelia came running to my chamber with her eyes ſparkling with joy, and an air of the utmoſt ſatisfaction; What do you think, my dear? cry'd ſhe, as ſoon as ſhe ſaw me at a diſtance; the engaging Mellifont has been ſaying ſome of the moſt agreeable tender things to me. ——O he is a charming man! He came to-day as uſual, when thinking that it was to you we ow'd his viſit, I told him I would let you know that he

was here, at the ſame time turning in order to go and ſeek for you, but he prevented me—— he took hold of my hand, and deſiring me to ſtay, ſaid that his buſineſs was now with me. I went with him into the parlour, when ſeating himſelf by me with ſuch a ſoft look as I have ſometimes ſeen him fix upon you, I know, Madam, ſaid he, you will be ſurpriſed at what I am going to ſay to you; Felicia's rigour and your charms have cured my paſſion for her. I have been unable to ſupport that lady's conſtant indifference, and am not of a temper to indulge a ſoftneſs that can be of no ſervice to me. I will never be the dupe of a girl's vanity, nor whine in doleful ditty the diſmal ſtory of deſpairing love. I am reſolved to be happy, and would have you obſerve that it is out of the power of any of your fair ſex to make me miſerable. This, Madam, continued Amelia, was to prevent my uſing him as you have done; for he immediately added ſo many agreeable compliments, and ſuch ſtrong proteſtations of the ſincerity of his love, that I could never be weary of hearing him ——— O he is a charming man! This change is happy for us both: Is it not, Madam? ——— I dare ſay he is perfectly ſincere.

HERE

HERE Amelia took time to breathe; for her extaſy had carried her on with ſuch rapidity, that in the exultation of her heart, ſhe hardly knew how to give a moment's truce to her tranſport. Her whole ſoul overflow'd with joy, and it overflow'd ſo faſt, that her utterance could hardly keep pace with the ſwift courſe of her ideas. The moſt trifling word had the air of rapture, and every ſentence the dignity of triumph.

HOWEVER, ſhe no ſooner gave me leave to ſpeak, than embracing her with much affection, Yes, my dear, cry'd I ſmiling, this revolution is happy for us both, and I ſincerely congratulate you on the conqueſt of a heart that has ſo long been dear to you. Lucius has loſt a rival that he had reaſon to fear, and I have no longer the dread of diſobliging my father by refuſing to marry a gentleman I cannot love; but I have yet no proſpect of his ever giving Lucius his conſent: that is as far off as ever; while you, who yeſterday was ready to envy the poor felicity I enjoy'd, of having my almoſt hopeleſs paſſion return'd, have in a moment obtain'd your wiſhes. My aunt will approve your mutual tenderneſs, and in a few days cement your happy union; how vaſtly is your happineſs ſuperior to mine! O my dear Felicia,

returned

return'd ſhe again; can't you rejoice with me, without theſe bitter reflections? Expect the ſame delightful turn in your affairs, and depend upon my aſſiſtance in procuring it. A father's compliance is not ſure ſo hard to obtain, when the felicity of a dear and only child is at ſtake. Let us communicate every thing to Lucius. I will engage my mamma, as ſoon as poſſible, to take us with her to pay his mother and Marilla a viſit. We ſhall find him at home. He ſhall know he has had a rival, and we will tell him the reaſon of its being kept ſo long a ſecret. — He knows already the ſtate of our affairs, reply'd I, and had acquainted me with them, before you knew your own happineſs. ——— Here are a few lines that I received from him on this ſubject, juſt after I roſe from dinner.

AT this ſhe took the letter out of my hand with an eager ſurpriſe, her face was covered with a modeſt bluſh, which diſcovered ſome confuſion; and her eyes were in a moment glew'd to the paper, which ſeem'd to renew her joy. She read it over ſeveral times, and ſeemed to dwell with extaſy on that part which related the converſation between my lover and Mellifont; but at laſt returning it, This is a proof, cried ſhe, with a freſh kindling ſatiſfaction

faction in her looks, that he is ſincere in his profeſſions. It is not a raſh haſty fit of diſguſt that makes him fly to me! He has examined his heart; he conſults his friend; he loves me almoſt as well as I do him! This authoriſes the delight I feel, and proves that I have not been miſtaken in thinking him ſincere. ——— He has fix'd his choice, and I ſhall be happy!

THESE words were inſpired by a tranſport that made her exalt her voice much above her uſual manner of ſpeaking, ſo that my aunt, who was entering the room at the ſame time, heard her very diſtinctly. We both ſaw her in the ſame moment, and both were under ſome confuſion at this unexpected interruption, ſince we could not gueſs how much ſhe had over-heard of what we were unwilling to inform her of. However this diſorder was very ſhort; for ſhe came forwards with a ſmile, accompany'd with an air that had not the leaſt mark of diſpleaſure. Heigh-day! cried ſhe (with her eyes alternately fixed upon her daughter and me) what is the matter, pray? What, all in raptures? Mayn't your mother, Amelia, partake of your ſatisfaction? I am come to claim a ſhare in your confidence, and to deſire you would let me know Melliſont's buſineſs with you to-day, and the ſubſtance of that long converſation

converſation you had together. Come, be free, my dear, and tell me all.

HERE I found that ſhe was ſtill ignorant of Lucius's paſſion, when obſerving that Amelia caſt down her eyes, and with a viſible diſorder heſitated how to reply, I inſtantly removed her embarraſment. O Madam, ſaid I, we have ſtran e things to tell you. Mellifont finding my heart too flinty to be ſof ened by all his endeavours, has ſhook off my chains, and ſeeks for happineſs from the more gentle diſpoſition of Amelia's ſoul. While paying his addreſſes to me, he diſcovered a thouſand charms in her, and therefore wiſely conſulting his own happineſs, has changed the object of a hopeleſs paſſion, for one who he has reaſon to flatter himſelf will prove more favourable. And I dare ſay, Madam, ſince you approved of his being your nephew, you will not be leſs willing he ſhould be your ſon. No, child, returned ſhe, ſo far from having any objections to him, I freely confeſs that I ſhould be proud of his alliance. But are you ſure that he is ſincere in his pretenſions? Inferior as Amelia's fortune will be to his, I ſhould highly reſent my daughter's being made a property of. This is perhaps only an artifice by which he hopes to awaken your jealouſy. My jealouſy! Madam, cried

I with ſome warmth; no, he could never have the vanity to think it. I dare ſay he is in earneſt, and ſo far from being offended at his preferring my couſin to me, I rejoice in his change, and look upon it with peculiar ſatisfaction. Well, whatever is his deſign, rejoin'd my aunt, a little time will diſcover it. However, Felicia, I would have you believe that I am not much leſs concerned for your happineſs, than I am for Amelia's; you are both very dear to me; ——— but your affections are perhaps already engaged. —— Here I bluſh'd in my turn, which I fancy ſhe took notice of; for after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe only added, But it is not my buſineſs to examine you on this ſubject; tho' I ſhould be very glad to have a ſhare in your confidence. As for you, Amelia, I hope you won't ſcruple to diſcover to me the ſituation of your heart. You know I am too tender a mother not to conſult your inclinations, as well as my own. Theſe laſt words were expreſſed in a moſt moving tone; while my couſin, who had been hitherto ſilent, could not conceal the riſing tear, which with mute eloquence expreſſed her gratitude, and thank'd her for her indulgent goodneſs; when ſtarting up, ſhe ſprung into her arms, and gave her a feeling embrace, which the fond mother,

with

with conſcious happineſs in her looks, return'd with equal ardor.

YOU can't conceive, Madam, how much I was affected with the goodneſs of the parent, and the confidence which it immediately produced in the mind of the child. Amelia diſſolv'd in filial tenderneſs, acknowledged her regard for Mellifont; while my aunt approv'd her paſſion; approved it with an air of joy, tho' ſtill doubting the ſincerity of his pretenſions. When to remove her ſcruples, my couſin promis'd to make her a judge, by giving her an account of his future behaviour.

I WAS all this while a ſtupid obſerver, and was almoſt aſhamed not to have a ſhare in theſe pleaſing careſſes. Do I indulge a paſſion, ſaid I to myſelf, that I am afraid of acknowledging to a perſon ſo well worthy of all my confidence? Will a lady that has ſo much conſideration for her daughter, as to tell her that ſhe is too tender a parent not to conſult her child's inclinations rather than her own; a woman that is ſuch an excellent judge of real merit, be inſenſible of the perfections of my dear Lucius, and diſapprove of my paſſion for ſo valuable, ſo worthy a man? One whom ſhe treats with ſo much reſpect, and on whoſe virtue, ſtrong ſenſe, and other valuable accom-

pliſhments, I have heard her make ſo many encomiums. I can't believe it. She will be pleaſed too with my confidence, approve my diſcernment, and give me her aſſiſtance to work upon my father. Well then, I will boldly confeſs my tender ſentiments for this engaging youth, and unterrified at the ſmallneſs of his eſtate, will plead the cauſe of virtue againſt that of wealth; I will gain her over by my reſpectful confidence, work upon her pity, and engage her to give us her friendly aſſiſtance, her compaſſionate and endearing advice.

THIS was my final reſolution; but though I had no reaſon to prevent my putting it in execution, yet I no ſooner attempted to open my lips upon this too intereſting ſubject, than my courage failed, my heart with ſoft and fluttering timidity rebelled againſt the dictates of reaſon; a thouſand ſcruples inſtantly aroſe; I bluſh'd; conſcious ſhame held faſt my tongue; the firſt word died my upon lips; my confidence vaniſhed; and I found the words, *I love*, ſo hard to be uttered, that I was forced in ſpite of myſelf to continue ſilent, and leave unattempted the too ſoftening confeſſion; while all the advantages I ſo reaſonably expected from her aſſiſtance were unable to ſurmount the weakneſs

I laboured under. What a painful perplex'd ſituation was this! and how hard is it for a virtuous mind, to prevent that ſhame which ought only to accompany vice, from attending the moſt laudable paſſions! The mind, enfeebled by cuſtom, is taught to regard that as a weakneſs which is its higheſt perfection; nor is it ſtrange that the moſt honourable and decent love ſhould be accompanied with a modeſt reluctant ſhame, ſince we are taught to bluſh, at being diſcovered in the practice of the nobleſt and moſt ſublime virtues.

My aunt did not ſtay long; ſoftened by her own affection, and the tenderneſs of her daughter, ſhe left us with all that ſatisfaction in her looks, that could ariſe from the contemplation of the felicity of her child; when the perturbation of my mind, occaſion'd by the ſtruggle between my diffidence and reaſon, inſenſibly diſperſed, and at laſt left me at leiſure calmly to ſympathiſe in the happineſs of my friends. Hope now gains the aſcendant in my mind, and the indulgence of this good mother makes me flatter myſelf with the ſame from a father, no leſs affectionately concern'd for my intereſt.

WITH my ſincereſt reſpects to his lordſhip, I am, Madam, with all poſſible affection,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XVII.

MADAM,

IT is not without the appearance of reaſon that you are ſurpriſed at the unaccountable manner in which we diſpoſe of our hearts; but if we look around us, we ſhall find cauſe to vindicate the grave, the ſedate and tranquil Amelia, for loving a perſon of a temper ſo widely different from her own. It is not always a reſemblance of ourſelves in temper, any more than in features, that conſtitute the ſtrongeſt attractive. On the contrary, the thoughtful mind, conſcious of its own incapacity to render itſelf happy, is naturally charm'd with one whoſe airy ſprightlineſs is beſt adapted to give it relief, and vary its pleaſures by inſpiring the delightful relaxations of the more lively ſocial enjoyments; while the vivacious volatile temper expects the ſame ſatisfaction from the ſagacious, and more ſober reflections

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of ſolid thought, and decent prudence. Thus we frequently find that a contraſt of this kind, gives a variety, which adds a poignancy to their joys, while perſons, whoſe ſouls nature ſeems to have form'd in the ſame mould, too often drag on a dull inſipid life; or trifle it away with a mixture of alternate levity and ſpleen. Yet after all, it muſt be confeſſed, that however various their tempers, it is abſolutely neceſſary there ſhould be a conformity, at leaſt, of paſſion and ſentiment.

METHINKS I write now with the gravity of a philoſopher; and that in accounting for Amelia's tenderneſs for Mellifont, I have very handſomely apologized for that of your trifling friend, for the grave and learned Lucius.

YESTERDAY being the time we had appointed to pay Marilla's mother a viſit, my aunt, Amelia and I, ſet out on foot, as ſoon as we had din'd, after having given orders for the coach to fetch us back in the evening. The day was excee ding fine; and the air rendered cool and refreſhing by a gentle breeze, which juſt waved the yellow corn, that opening in a narrow path gave us an eaſy and delightful paſſage; while the bearded ears hung their heavy heads ſurcharged with myriads of glittering pearls, the fruits of a haſty ſhower, which before

fore we had ſet out, had refreſh'd the earth, and embalm'd the air with a fragrance, infinitely more pleaſing than that which ariſes from the powder'd toupée of an accompliſh'd beau, or the odours which ſcent your ladyſhip's gloves. A thouſand clouds with intermingled gold and purple, of various lights and ſhades, adorn'd the wide, the blue immenſe, or dimm'd the too ardent rays of the dazzling ſun; while the inſatiate eye greedily ſurvey'd the wide ſtretch'd plenty, or the diſtant woods embrown'd by Autumn, or glowing with a lengthen'd verdure of various hues. Here friendly chat and innocent gaiety kept up our ſpirits, deluded away the time, and help'd to increaſe the tender joy which glow'd in my boſom, at every thought of my ſpeedily ſeeing Lucius. I ſaw the farmer, to whom I had given ſo ſeaſonable a relief, with honeſt front giving orders to his ſervants. My heart ſprung again with a bounding joy; I found myſelf in the fields I had preſerv'd in his poſſeſſion, and felt more charms in the great abundance that ſurrounded me from the reflection of its contributing to the advancement of an honeſt, though unfortunate family, than the moſt rapacious miſer in viewing his hoarded treaſures. He perceived me, when with an humble ſcrape and

grateful look, he ſilently expreſs'd his acknowledgments.

AT laſt we arrived at the end of our walk, when as Marilla had been privately acquainted the night before with our intended viſit, we were ſure to find Lucius at home; they both met us at the gate, accompanied by their mother, where they all with glowing extaſy paid us their compliments, and conducted us into a neat and well furniſh'd parlour. Here we took ſome refreſhment, which being over, Amelia judging by her own heart, that I ſhould be glad of an opportunity of a ſeparate converſation, ask'd me with a ſmile, if I was not too weary with my walk, to take a turn with her in the garden, while Lucius and Marilla, with a ſparkling intelligent kind of ſatisfaction in their looks, offered their ſervice to accompany us.

HERE we had a moſt tender interview; I explained the reaſon of my conduct, in concealing from him the addreſſes of Mell ſont, and thanked him for the aſſiſtance he had given me, in ſparing me the trouble of being teized by his importunities; while he kiſſed my hand with eager tranſports of delight. We then conſulted how to procure my father's conſent; but had come to no determination, when we

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were interrupted by my aunt, whom we ſaw coming down the alley to meet us. However, ſhe did not diſcover much ſurpriſe at ſeeing us together without our companions, who we immediately told her were gone to gather ſome fruit, which indeed was the excuſe they had made uſe of in leaving us; but we had hardly made this apology for their abſence, when we perceived them returning; and my aunt telling us that ſhe was afraid we ſhould fatigue ourſelves too much, deſired we would walk in; we conſented and immediately follow'd her.

SOPHRONIA, Lucius's mother, entertain'd me with all that eaſe and polite freedom, which is natural to a well-bred woman; and the part ſhe bore in the converſation ſufficiently diſcovered her good ſenſe, and the delicacy and juſtneſs of her ſentiments, whilſe an air of ſweetneſs gave a grace to every thing ſhe ſaid. We were entertain'd with ſeveral ſubjects, without the leaſt connection, moſt of which were very trifling; but at laſt, the clergy being mention'd, and ſeveral ſmart ſtories told of the jocoſe manner in which the vicar of a neighbouring pariſh conferred the greateſt benefits, we inſenſibly became intereſted in the ſubject. From the clergy we digreſſed to religion, an eaſy tranſition: when the errors of chriſtians,

ſanctified by the venerable name of orthodoxy, were proved inconſiſtent with reaſon, with all our ideas of moral beauty and natural harmony; with all thoſe engaging portraits of the Deity, with the ſwell of humanity which expands our boſoms, refines our ideas, and makes us partake of the divine pleaſures of beneficence and conſcious virtue, with the kindly impreſſions we every where receive from a view of Nature, equally lovely in all her works, and equally conſpiring to an univerſal happineſs; and, in ſhort, with the plaineſt diſcoveries of that revelation which we acknowledge to be divine. Man, the nobleſt part of this lower creation, ſaid Lucius, is ſunk from the dignity of his being, and repreſented as naturally incapable of pleaſing, by his beſt actions, his kind and benevolent maker. What a reflection on the divine artificer! our very virtues are crimes, and the moſt perfect uſe of all our powers, merit no other reward than eternal damnation! what a prepoſterous opinion to think of pleaſing the creator by degrading his works! So far from having any moral ſenſe, any inwrought love of virtue, we are, ſay they, form'd with a thouſand propenſities to vice; and there is not a crime which ever was committed, but what lurks in the breaſt of every man,

man, as he is form'd by nature, and to which he is particularly inclin'd. If this be the caſe, a manly action and a villainous one are ſynonymous terms; and to ſay a perſon behaves like a man, is to ſay he is a ſodomite, a murderer, a parricide; and what, if poſſible, is a greater contradiction ſtill, it is to ſay, that he is to the laſt degree penurious and extravagant; that he deſtroys himſelf by debauchery, and yet pines away for want. In ſhort, that he acts from vicious principles ſo oppoſite, that they muſt neceſſarily deſtroy each other. Sentiments that in themſelves are not more monſtrous, than inconſiſtent with experience, and every dictate of reaſon and common ſenſe. But the beneficent father of the univerſe, whoſe invariable goodneſs is infinite and boundleſs, has been ſo far from curſing his offspring by inſpiring them with ſuch baleful invenom'd diſpoſitions, that he has ſtrongly connected, by the very frame of our minds, vice and cruelty with hate, and ſhame and horror: virtue, with a thouſand charms, a thouſand lovely attractives. Supreme and unrivalled in glory, and glowing with a conſcious ſenſe of his own matchleſs, unfading felicity, he creates, to communicate happineſs, and forms a wonderous ſcale of beings, widely to extend the glo-

rious emanations of his goodneſs. He makes it their duty to be happy, and the glory of each individual, like him, to diffuſe happineſs around him. He places them in a ſtate of trial, with every tender ſocial affection in their hearts, to ſtruggle with each ſelfiſh thought, and gives a ray of his wiſdom to direct in what manner to exerciſe the particular exertions of theſe intendering diſpoſitions. What a ſubject for gratitude; for the moſt devout, the moſt humble and elevated piety! This is the religion of Nature; the generous, the friendly religion of the Bible: that one invariable religion, which will ever be a law to every ſpecies of moral and accountable beings, from men up to the higheſt order of celeſtial ſpirits.

NOR can there be a religion, I could not help interrupting, that gives us more exalted ſentiments of the Deity. What ſurpriſing munificence! The nobleſt pleaſures that can ſwell our minds, are thoſe which accompany the practice of virtue; and yet, exquiſite as theſe delights are, they are only a prelude to diviner raptures; they refine the ſoul, and fit us for that ſtate of being, where our joys ſhall be unmixed with care, and uninterrupted by the ſtruggle of contending paſſions; where friendſhip and gratitude ſhall be refined into

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the pureſt extaſies! and every ſocial affection attune the ſoul into the moſt perfect harmony! delightful thought! how lovely is the Deity, and how worthy of our higheſt eſteem, and veneration!

You would have ſmiled, my dear friend, had you ſeen the delight Lucius expreſſed in his countenance at finding my ſentiments ſo agreeable to his own; his eyes while I was ſpeaking kindled with unuſual briskneſs; and tempered the tender ſoftneſs of his glances with an air of the higheſt ſatisfaction.

But theſe enthuſiaſts, reply'd my aunt, who from an affectation of humility, have treated their own ſpecies with ſuch inſolent reproach, have not had leſs regard to the moſt ſacred obligations. Who can hear without aſtoniſhment the charming ties of virtue blaſphem'd? the foundation of all public and private happineſs, treated with contempt? Strange indeed, that men ſhould be ſo inſenſible of the ſtriking graces of a virtuous character! that that ſacred law, to which the Deity himſelf pays obedience, ſhould be loaded with the vileſt reproach even from the pulpit! A good-natur'd perſon muſt feel all the humanity of his boſom riſe with indignation at the impious profanation.

HOWEVER ſurpriſing this may appear, reply'd Sophronia, yet our wonder will in a great meaſure vaniſh, if we conſider that the ſame perſons diſcard the uſe of reaſon from religion; for while this is the caſe, nothing can be too abſurd to be embraced; nay, abſurdity itſelf, continued ſhe, has been made a mark of truth, and people have ſtretched their faith ſo far as to give their aſſent to what they themſelves acknowledged to be impoſſible. What could the utmoſt barbariſm of ignorance do more? The Deity, all lovely as he is, glowing with every virtue, and ſurrounded with the dazzling radiance of a heavenly ſmile, is repreſented as ſtern and inexorable, weak and partial, as pleaſed with idle compliments, empty praiſes, and little tricks of devotion; as ſupreme in fell revenge, with relentleſs malevolence, conſigning irretrievably before the world began, ninety-nine of every hundred of his future offſpring to eternal horrors, and the utmoſt height of agonizing torture; while they, the deſtined few, happy favourites! triumph in his mercy, and extol this ſuperlative inſtance of his paternal goodneſs, and kind partiality. Horrid thought! cry'd Lucius; what a tyrant! what a monſter! what a devil! Can we form an idea of a being more tremendouſly terrible?

A harpy or cerberian monſter, with more envenom'd rancour? This is the height of dæmoniſm; but let the poor heathen howl and tremble before his pagod; let the barbarian pollute with human blood the altars of his idol; let the ignorant mandarin, the bigotted derviſe, or Romiſh zealot, wound and torment themſelves to pleaſe a being who has no exiſtence in nature; or the falſly reform'd chriſtian ſtrive to outvie the pagan, in the frantic reveries of his enthuſiaſm, virtue and harmony will ſtill be the ſame; and the Almighty, unpolluted by their praiſes, will look with pity on the errors of his children; they are all the objects of his impartial regard, and equally intitled to his favour; for as Mr. Hill juſtly obſerves,

"*Briton and Ruſſian differ but in name*;
"*In Nature's ſenſe all nations are the ſame.*"

STRANGE abſurdity! ſaid I, that religion ſhould be brought to overturn all the obligations of religion! for it is incredible that any revelation ſhould be thought to be true, which ſuppoſes the author of it falſe, malevolent, and cruel. But while our prieſts declaim againſt morality, it is no great wonder that it ſhould be deſpiſed by the laity; ſuch gloomy repreſen-

tations of religion, ſuch contemptible diſcourſes of virtue, muſt needs corrupt the minds of the multitude, and fix the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt every thing ſacred; make our duty looked upon as a burthen; and the moſt pleaſing exerciſes of grateful piety, regarded as an irkſome drudgery.

OUR converſation was here interrupted by a ſervant, who entering with a letter deliver'd it to my aunt, at the ſame time telling her, that as it had been left for her juſt before our coachman ſet out, he thought proper to bring it with him. She received it with an air of joy, when breaking it open, and caſting her eyes at the bottom, ſhe told me it came from my father, and a minute after added with a ſmile, and a tone of ſurpriſe, that he was preparing to take a journey to ſee me. What a ſudden confuſion did this unexpected news give me! The joy that I was ready to receive, was ſuſpended by the ſhock of a riſing apprehenſion, that ſomething extraordinary was the cauſe of this journey. Sure, ſaid I to myſelf, he can't be acquainted with our mutual paſſion! What an alarm did this doubt give me! my heart trembled with a very painful diſorder; and it now flutters in the ſame uneaſy manner, while I acquaint you that I dread to ſee him. But what

what have I done, that I ſhould be afraid of ſeeing my father's face?———Oh my dear Lucius!——— to be deprived of the hopes of living with thee——— to ſee thee no more! Oh! I can't bear to think of it. It was then impoſſible to prevent my apprehenſions from making ſome alteration in my countenance.—I endeavour'd to conceal them under a look of ſurpriſe; but, in ſpite of myſelf, that ſurpriſe had ſome traces of uneaſineſs.——— I ſtruggled with myſelf in vain——— my aunt perceived it———. I ſaw ſhe did; and that encreaſed my diſorder; but ſhe had too much good-nature to encreaſe it ſtill more, by ſeeming to take notice of it. Lucius too had his eyes fix'd upon mine, while I perceiv'd that he every moment chang'd colour, and appear'd not leſs alarm'd than myſelf. However it was now time to retire, and I was ſoon miſtreſs enough of myſelf to take my leave of theſe dear friends with a tolerable good grace.

WHAT will be the ſubject of my next letter I can't gueſs; my father's preſence will undoubtedly make a conſiderable alteration in my affairs, and I am now in the utmoſt ſuſpenſe, yet dread to know the reaſon of his journey. Dear Madam, if you can inform me what I

ought to think of it, let me hear from you by the next poſt.

WITH my ſincereſt reſpects to his lordſhip, I am,

MADAM,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XVIII.

OH! MADAM,

I HAVE ſtrange things to tell you. My father arrived this morning, and has thrown me into ſuch confuſion that I am hardly able to write to you. I was looking out of my window, bewildered with a mazy crowd of uſeleſs reflections, and had ſtood for ſome time without motion, when I was rouz'd from this ſtupid ſituation of mind, by a coach and ſix, which drove in a cloud of duſt at a great rate towards our houſe, attended by ſeveral ſervants. I did not ſee them till they were near. They alighted at the gate, and almoſt in the ſame moment I heard my father's voice. Forgetful of my fears, every care was in an inſtant ſwallow'd up by duty: my heart glow'd with affection.

affection. It is my father! it is my father! I cry'd aloud. He lifted up his eyes and ſaw me, when ſtarting from the window, I ran down ſtairs with the utmoſt eagerneſs to embrace him. I met him in the hall. I flew into his arms, when turning from me to avoid my embrace, he deſir'd me coldly to walk in; but at the ſame time gave a ſigh, and fixed upon me a look, which diſcovered how much he ſuffered by this reſtraint. Ah, Madam! you can't conceive what a ſhock this behaviour gave me. I burſt into tears, and went into the parlour, follow'd by Amelia.

TELL me, my dear couſin, ſaid I, as ſoon as I could ſpeak, tell me what I ſhall do. How muſt I ſupport my father's anger? Do you think now, I deſerve to be treated in this manner?— I can't bear to think of offending him. I know it is hard for him to uſe me unkindly. ——— But ſure he has no cauſe to give me ſuch a cold reception. ——— He has heard of my loving Lucius; but is that ſuch a crime?—Alas! I muſt be unhappy, and Lucius muſt be ſo too!

I WAS interrupted in this bitter complaint, which was intermingled with ſighs and tears, by hearing my father at the door, who enter'd the room juſt as Amelia was going to endeavour

to

to comfort me. She ſat near me, with her looks fix'd upon mine; he ſaw us both in a moving ſituation, and when we lifted up our eyes to his, the mutual tears that for a moment almoſt ſtopp'd our ſight, trickled down our cheeks, and ſeem'd to make a ſtrong impreſſion on his countenance. When turning to my aunt who ſtood behind him at the door, he told her, he deſired to be a few minutes alone with me. At this, Amelia aroſe, and after preſſing my hand with the utmoſt tenderneſs, retir'd with my aunt.

My father, as if he knew not how to behave, and perhaps wanting time to compoſe his mind, in order to treat me with a ſternneſs ſuitable to the ſubject of his complaint, and which I dare ſay, he had need of all his reſolution to ſupport, took a few turns about the room, with the appearance of the utmoſt diſorder; but at laſt growing more compoſed, he faſtened the door and ſeated himſelf by me, giving me a fix'd look, which had a mixture of anger and ſenſibility, while I held down my head, drown'd in tears, and almoſt ſtifled with my ſighs; and indeed I was ſo intimidated by his preſence, that I hardly durſt lift up a glance to obſerve his countenance. My heart ached in the moſt painful manner, and ſeem'd to

ſtruggle

ſtruggle to vent its complaints. At laſt ſeeming to recollect himſelf, Felicia, it is with ſhame, ſaid he, in a grave tone, that I ſee you the diſgrace of my family. Fooliſh girl! what could induce you to forfeit your honour? My fondneſs made me flatter myſelf with abundance of pleaſing hopes. I have conſidered you as my only child, as the picture of your dear mother, and you muſt have been ſenſible that my whole happineſs was bound up in yours. What then, ungrateful creature, could induce you to throw off my authority, and to ſuffer yourſelf to be ſeduced by an artful deſigning villain. Alas! is this the fruits of that virtue, and good-ſenſe, in which I have prided myſelf? Is this the effects of that delicacy and innocent wit, in which I weakly fancied that you reſembled your dear mother? This the reward of all my tender cares and pleaſing hopes? But you ſhall know that a father's reſentment is to be feared. It is ſtill in my power to puniſh you. ——— And I aſſure you, the raſcal that has corrupted your innocence, and made me an unhappy parent, ſhall feel the effects of my rage.

How was it poſſible, Madam, for me to ſupport ſuch reproaches from a father, whom I had never injur'd even in thought? To hear Lucius, my dear Lucius, reproached in

the coarſeſt epithets! to hear him charged with ſeducing me! to be thought ungrateful! to be regarded as a monſter, who had no ſenſe of honour and duty! my heart roſe with indignation. —— I could not bear theſe unjuſt reflections. —— But in the ſame moment obſerving the agitations of my father's countenance, and reflecting upon what he now ſuffered for me, I diſſolved in affection, and with a precipitation, inſpired by a ſudden impulſe of ſoul, threw myſelf at his feet. Hear me, Sir, hear me, cry'd I, (with a reſolution inſpired by my innocence; while my eagerneſs to vindicate myſelf, filled me with an impatience that made me inſtantly loſe ſight of all that diffidence and reſtraint which had before kept me ſilent) let me know of what I am accuſed — In what reſpect have I forfeited my honour? —— How have I offended you? —— Tell me, dear father, —— tell me in what inſtance I have abuſed your goodneſs —— Can you aſk *me* that queſtion? return'd he in an inexorable tone? —— Have I not ſufficient reaſon to be offended? —— There, read that, cry'd he, and bluſh to think, that you dare preſume to impoſe upon me by an air of innocence; I know the world too well to ſuffer myſelf to be deceived by theſe artifices.

You

You will there find, that however ſecretly you have managed your intrigues, I have been but too well acquainted with them.

HERE throwing me a letter and ariſing haſtily, he walked to the door with an air that ſhew'd him not in the leaſt ſoften'd at the ſimplicity of my behaviour; when ſtopping ſhort, as if blaming himſelf for leaving me on the floor, he return'd with equal ſpeed to help me up. But I aroſe before he came to me, when ſnatching up the letter, I thought, Sir, cry'd I in a reſolute tone, that I ſhould never be ſo unhappy as to be refuſed to be heard by my father; but however unkindly you are now pleaſed to treat me, it ſhall never make me forget my duty. At this I opened the letter, and he went out of the room. In a few minutes I no longer wondered at his treatment; my whole reſentment was levelled at the wicked author of thoſe malicious lines; and I could not help acquitting my father, and thinking my conduct highly reaſonably, on a ſuppoſition that he believed thoſe vile aſperſions. You yourſelf, Madam, ſhall ſee the letter, that you may judge how groſly I have been abuſed, and I now tranſcribe it with the utmoſt exactneſs.

" SIR

" SIR

" THO i am intyrly unnown to you my re-
" gard for your onner makes me lay before
" you an afare in wich you are partikularly
" conſarnd tho i muſt confeſs i have a uaſt
" deal of reluktans at communikatin the ſe-
" cret intreges of miſs feliſia for wom I haue a
" grate affecſhon but you will no all ſooner or
" latter i am uery ſorry to tell you that un-
" nown to her aunt ſhe kepes company with
" a yung gentleman of little fortin wen com-
" pard with hers but it wud give you too much
" conſarn to ſay that her uarty is intirely loſt
" i hope it is not quite ſo bad yet howiuar he
" has don her a ſtill grater ingury by korruptin
" her mynd god nos nothin but my regard for
" her cud make me ſend you this afliktive neus
" euery word of wich I aſhur you upon my
" onner is ſtrikly treu i wud aduiſe you to ſend
" for her up to toun as priuatly as poſible her
" ant loves her as euery body dus that nos her
" and it wud be a ſad aflikſhon to the gud lady
" to find that ſhe ſhud behave ſo badly while
" under her care and as this wud be a conſarn
" that cud do her no gud it wud be better not
" to let her no it i have won more thing to ad
" and that is that however gilty you find her

" you

" you wud trete her gently this my affekſhon
" for her makes me beg of you remember ſhe
" is your child ſo concluds

Your and feliſias
ſincere tho unnown friend.

" P. S. the yung mans father is a doun
" rite lybertin and not wurth a graut.

I AM ſure, Madam, your generous concern for my happineſs makes you now feel much the ſame riſings of indignation at reading the vile inſinuations of this ridiculous letter that I did, and therefore I need not particularly deſcribe the various pangs of working antipathy it occaſioned in my boſom. What groſs, what infamous reflections! But a heart filled with conſcious innocence, is the beſt ſupport againſt ſlander. What little reaſon have we to boaſt of the ſuperior advantages of education, when perſons of the meaneſt attainments can deſtroy our peace, and make ſuch bitter inroads on our happineſs! The ſtupidity and ill-ſpelling of the letter, I was ſenſible could not give my father the leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect the ſincerity of the writer, ſince a perſon of the meaneſt ſenſe and moſt illiberal education, is equally as good a judge of facts, as thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the

the moſt amiable accompliſhments. And indeed, ſo far from this being an objection, it muſt appear to him as a circumſtance that confirm'd the hateful inſinuations it contained, ſince he would naturally ſuppoſe, that a perſon who appeared ſo much beneath me, could have no very particular acquaintance with me, and conſequently could have no intereſt in view in attempting to deceive him. Theſe were ſome of the firſt reflections I made on this part of my misfortunes. But who is the writer? ſaid I to myſelf? this I am particularly intereſted to know, ſince it is of the greateſt importance towards clearing my injur'd innocence, and regaining my father's eſteem. At this I fix'd my eyes again upon the letter, and fancied it was a woman's hand, while the falſe orthography convinced me that my conjecture was well founded. But then who had I offended? There are none, ſaid I, that I have ſeen here that I dare fix ſuch a baſe ſuſpicion upon; beſides, could malice alone ſeek to ruin me without ſome deep laid ſcheme of rankling ſelfiſhneſs? But whoſe happineſs do I oppoſe? I know nobody to whoſe felicity I would not contribute. What muſt I think? How can I clear myſelf, without being able to find out the wicked author of this heavy misfortune?

THUS,

THUS, Madam, I reaſon'd then, and thus I reaſon ſtill, while every reflection, inſtead of giving me the leaſt light into this dark affair, wraps it in a ſtill deeper obſcurity. But alas! had the whole been as great a falſhood as that part which charges the virtuous Lucius and me with guilt, I ſhould have leſs to fear. My aunt is ignorant of our tender paſſion; I have ſeen him without her knowledge; encouraged his addreſſes without my father's permiſſion; and ſtill love that worthy ſon of an unworthy father; the amiable ſon of an abandon'd libertine. How can I confeſs this without making him ſuſpect that the perſon to whom he owes this information, is too well acquainted with my weakneſs to be miſtaken in the leaſt particular. The truth of one circumſtance will give credit to the reſt, and give all too great an air of truth, while my father's opinion that Lucius is the author of my ruin, will root ſo deep a prejudice againſt him, that he will be deaf to all that can be ſaid in his favour, and hardly ever be brought to hear him vindicated with patience.

ALL theſe reflections paſſed thro' my mind with the utmoſt precipitation; for impatient to find ſomething to fix upon, that might lead me out of this labyrinth, and teach me how to calm

calm my father's anger, I in an inſtant collected every ſcattered thought, and ſought all around me for ſome pleaſing friendly hope on which I might ſupport my ſpirits, ready to ſink under my father's diſpleaſure: but my ſoul could glance its eye upon no comfort except my innocence; and as often as that occurred to my mind, there beam'd through it a ray of peace, which preſerved me from ſinking under this heavy load of difficulties. Amidſt theſe various agitations, my thoughts frequently return'd to my father, to the almoſt infinite inſtances I have received of his goodneſs. Intendering thoughts! delightful ideas! though now attended with bitterneſs.—A ſoothing bitterneſs that melted my ſoul, and filled my eyes again with freſh flowing tears. But here again, my innocence, ſweeteſt comfort of the diſtreſt! returned again, and made me reflect that I was ſtill as worthy of his indulgent regards as ever. Happy, delightful thought! O virtue! thou nobleſt ſource of fortitude, thou ſweeteſt ſupport of the human mind, how unſpeakable is thy value, and how much more than wretched is the mind that wants thy aids!

EMPLOY'D

EMPLOY'D in this manner, I ſpent a conſiderable time alone in the parlour, expecting every moment my father's return; for which, however, I was not yet prepared; when at laſt a ſervant came to tell me that dinner was upon table. I had hitherto been too deeply engaged to think of dining, and was therefore unprovided with an excuſe to prevent it, tho' in the ſituation I was in, it was natural to feel a great deal of reluctance againſt ſitting at the ſame table with my father; and beſides, the emotions I had ſuffered had intirely taken away my appetite. My mind, yet too diſturb'd for company, made me look upon ſollitude as a relief, I therefore ſent word that I was indiſpoſed, and deſired to be excuſed; but the next moment, conſidering that it would appear very ſingular to the family, and perhaps ſet the ſervants upon ſearching for the reaſon of my behaviour, if I alone ſhould be abſent from the table at my father's coming; and that nothing could appear to them ſufficient to excuſe my refuſal, I haſtily wip'd my eyes, and arming myſelf with all the courage I could collect, made haſte into the dining-room, in order to overtake the ſervant before he had delivered his meſſage.

I TOOK my ſeat with the reſt, with an air as calm as poſſible, tho' it is not to be ſuppoſed that my countenance could be entirely diveſted of every trace of uneaſineſs. My father had his eyes continually fixed upon me with an earneſtneſs that alternately expreſſed his anger and pity, while I endeavoured to ſupport his looks with an eaſy humble confidence. My aunt and Amelia regarded us both with a ſilent kind of admiration; and I dare ſay, there never was an elegant entertainment paſſed over with fewer words. As ſoon as the deſert was taken away, I drank my duty to my father: this was the firſt ſyllable that I had ſpoken; and though I had not eat a mouthful, neither my aunt nor couſin had preſſed me to it. They ſaw my diſorder, and did not queſtion my having cauſe for uneaſineſs, ſince my father appeared not more at eaſe than I. I drank, I ſay, my duty to my father; but my heart was too full to ſuffer me to ſpeak it plainly; theſe words trembled on my quivering lips; for my heart ſo ſtrongly felt the force of duty, that it would ſpeak it too: it ſtruggled to ſpeak it, my ſoftneſs would not be reſtrained, a guſh of filial piety ſtarted into my eyes, and the moment I lifted up my hand, hardly knowing what I did, the tears ſtarted and fell into the glaſs. I then

ſet

ſet it down untouch'd, and looking at my aunt, while the riſing ſwell again almoſt intercepted my ſight, You wonder, Madam, cried I, at the manner in which I welcome my father ——— Here ſhe interrupted me, by ordering the ſervant that was in waiting to retire; and he being gone I continued; And is it not a thing to be wondered at? I have not ſeen my father before theſe ſix months ——— that dear father, whoſe tenderneſs for me has been too great to be expreſs'd: but alas! his mind is tainted with the foulеſt ſuſpicions. O help me to vindicate my honour, and to find out the monſtrous author of theſe infamous lyes! I am ſure he will be glad to find me innocent! ——I know he will!

HERE I threw the letter upon the table, and unable to retain any longer the impetuous glut of ſorrow that now aroſe too high to be concealed, I drew out my handkerchief, and hanging down my head, gave free ſcope to my tears; my grief would not now admit of reſtraint, I therefore neither ſtifled my ſighs, nor groans; I ſobb'd aloud, and every one in the company bore a part in this melancholy entertainment; they all ſympathized with me, and wept without reſerve; even my father could not help joining with the reſt; I lifted

up my eyes, ſwimming in tears, and ſaw ſome big drops roll down his awful face, when ariſing haſtily, as if he feared being ſoftened too much to be able to retain his rigour, or dreading that he ſhould loſe his judgment in his affection, went out of the room with a countenance that expreſs'd more tenderneſs than auſterity.

As ſoon as he was gone, my aunt, taking me by the hand, and laying down the letter; I have been much ſurpriſed, ſaid ſhe, wiping her eyes, at my brother's behaviour, and have in vain endeavoured to find out the cauſe of it. He would give me no reaſon for treating you as he has done; but you have diſcovered the myſtery. He has been informed of your paſſion for Lucius: and don't you really love him? I have for ſome time ſuſpected it. Come, my dear, be ſincere; there is no crime in loving a man of his character. You need not tell me, that you are innocent of what is here laid to your charge.—I am ſatisfied that you are ſo, and have too good an opinion of you both, to entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion injurious to his honour or yours. You are both virtuous, and both worthy of my brother's eſteem. Ah! Madam, cried I, with a reſolution inſpired by my grief, will you forgive my injuring your goodneſs by concealing

cealing it from you? this is kind indeed. I do love him—tenderly love him——love him even more than myſelf;—but indeed, Madam, our mutual paſſion has been always regulated by the ſtricteſt virtue; ——— it is an innocent paſſion, and I aſſure you, that he loves me too well to propoſe any ſtep that would diſoblige my father; nor would he, great as his love is, accept of my hand without his conſent, who alone has a right to diſpoſe of me. This I know to be true; he has told me ſo himſelf, while I have rejoiced in his virtue, and conſidered it as a moſt convincing inſtance of the purity and ſublimity of his ſoul.

I DON'T queſtion it, my dear, returned ſhe, preſſing my hand, but who is the author of this malicious letter? I ſhould be glad to be inform'd of that; but Lucius may poſſibly be able to give us ſome light; I will write to him to-night, and incloſe this in it; meanwhile I will take upon me to clear up your virtue, and to give my brother better ſentiments of this amiable young man.—But it is fit he ſhould appear himſelf; let him be his own advocate, he will plead the cauſe of his own heart with prevailing eloquence. Dear Madam, cried I, embracing her, is it poſſible that you can be ſo very good? Do you indeed think we ſhall be

able to remove the invidious impreſſions that have been made upon my father's mind? O how happy ſhall I think my ſelf if I can but regain his affection; for the uneaſineſs he ſuffers on my account is more painful to me than all the effects of his diſpleaſure. My aunt embraced me in her turn, and endeavoured to recover my ſpirits by her careſſes. And in ſhort, having called for a pen and ink, wrote in the following terms to my dear Lucius.

"SIR,

"BY my brother's arrival this morning I "find that you and Felicia have been "much injured; but to remove the pain this "news may give you, I offer my beſt endea- "vours to undeceive him; nor ſhall my ut- "moſt efforts be wanting to do you juſtice; "by convincing him that you have a mind "that ſcorns to be guilty of what is laid to "your charge in the incloſed libel. Let it "be your care to find out the wicked author, "and let us ſee you as ſoon as poſſible.

Yours, &c.

****

THIS

THIS note, I ſay, was wrote in the wrapper, ſealed up, and ſent away by a ſervant who had orders to deliver it into his own hand. You ſee now, Madam, the ſituation of my affairs; I am upon a criſis which muſt determine my future happineſs or miſery. 'Tis true, the ſatisfaction I have receiv'd from my aunt's goodneſs is too great to be expreſſed; ſhe has given me hopes, which counter-balance my fears: and in the midſt of all my uneaſineſs, my gratitude and affection for her has ſome charms, ſome engaging ſweets, which will make themſelves felt. But yet, while my father is ſo offended, I muſt have a claim to your pity; and therefore, with the greateſt propriety, ſubſcribe my ſelf,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

Moſt unhappy Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER XIX.

BY the laſt poſt, Madam, I gave you an account of my father's arrival, and of the dreadful turn his preſence made in my affairs; and

I imagine that, fill'd with a friendly impatience, you long to hear whether I have yet, ſo far vindicated my honour, as to recover his eſteem, or whether I am ſtill oppreſs'd with the ſame uneaſineſs I then laboured under; I will therefore make haſte to gratify your curioſity, and repeat my letters, without waiting the return of the poſt for an anſwer; but did you but know how much I need your advice and conſolation, you would be as expeditious in writing as I am.

MY dear afflicted father I told you, unable to withſtand his natural affection, and reſolving to be guided only by the cool dictates of his judgment, was conſtrained, in order to keep a maſtery over his paſſions, to retire for ſome time, to collect his ſpirits; while I took advantage of his abſence to write you my laſt melancholly epiſtle, which took me up the whole afternoon; having tranſcrib'd the ridiculous letter I ſent you a copy of, while my aunt was writing to Lucius.

IN the evening, this good lady had the precaution to order the ſervants not to enter the room, leſt they ſhould be a witneſs of any expreſſions, that might ſhock my delicacy for them to hear. A behaviour that ſhew'd at once her prudence, and regard for my reputation.

tation. Even at ſupper, a dumb-waiter ſupplied the place of an attendant, ſo that we were entirely at liberty to enter, without reſtraint, upon the injuſtice of my father's ſuſpicions; nor could my aunt let ſlip this firſt opportunity of aſſuring him, that, notwithſtanding the malicious letter which had given him ſo much uneaſineſs, ſhe ſtill retained the higheſt opinion of my virtue and diſcretion. But to clear Felicia's innocence, ſaid ſhe, it is neceſſary that we ſhould try to find out the wicked writer; but as this will probably require time, you muſt endeavour meanwhile to diveſt yourſelf of prejudices, which may prevent your diſcovering the truth. It is not whether my niece has placed her affections upon a perſon of a fortune ſomething inferior to her's, that we are now to enquire after, but whether it is upon an unworthy object; whether ſhe has violated her regard for virtue; behaved, in any inſtance, inconſiſtent with a decent modeſty; or had any thoughts of diſpoſing of herſelf without your conſent? In ſhort, it is your Felicia's honour and duty we are to vindicate; and I don't doubt but we ſhall be able to do it, to the ſatisfaction of any diſintereſted perſon. What then, returned he, would you inſinuate, that there is no crime in placing her affections upon a man

beneath her? ——— a very pretty ſtory truly! If ſhe has no more regard for my authority than privately to favour the addreſſes of a worthleſs fellow, what ought I to think of her? Is this any inſtance either of her duty, or modeſty? ——— No, no, I am not fit to be conſulted ——— the old fool her father would be too ſcrupulous; he would perhaps conſult his daughter's honour to the prejudice of her inclinations; and it would be time enough to ſeek his conſent, when it will be of no ſervice to him to refuſe it. Severe as theſe words were, the manner of his uttering them added a double ſharpneſs: they touched me in a tender part, and penetrated my very ſoul. What could I do then but burſt into tears—into bitter tears, that aroſe from an agony too painful to be endured. Theſe were all the anſwer that I could make him; only as I aroſe to go to bed, I ſobb'd out: Indeed, Sir, your ſuſpicions go to my very heart; but it is my ſatisfaction that I don't deſerve them. Indeed I have never injur'd you, even in thought.

You will readily believe that I was now too much indiſpoſed to taſte the refreſhing ſweets of ſleep. I was no ſooner laid down than I began to give way to a whole croud of painful reflections. I conſidered my ſelf as the moſt

unhappy

unhappy creature upon earth; and as worthy of the pity of the meaneſt peaſant. My father, ſaid I to myſelf, looks upon me with ſhame! my dear, my tender father hardens his heart againſt me! I have loſt his eſteem—loſt his affection ——— Had I ſacrificed my paſſion for Lucius to him, I might have made a merit of my obedience, and the pleaſure he would have received from the reflection of my duty, would have been ſome recompence for the violence I ſhould have done my ſelf. But I have now loſt both my father and my lover. What a ſhock to nature! what a violence to love! Like a wretch the moſt deſolate and forlorn, I find myſelf deprived of every comfort —— of every comfort except my innocence — What a group of miſeries has this day produced! when fill'd with joy at my father's preſence, while nature, ſtruggling in my boſom, made me fly to his arms, longing to embrace him, and eager to welcome him upon his arrival, to turn away from me with diſdain, to treat me as a guilty criminal, as the diſgrace of his family! Oh my heart! how have I been able to ſuſtain the ſhock! what would I not give to find out the author of all my troubles? Oh! my dear Lucius! didſt thou but know the agony, the diſtraction of my ſoul at this

moment, how nearly would thy deſpair reſemble mine! alas! —— thou wilt know it too ſoon — I ſhall never be thine! I muſt bid adieu to all my pleaſing proſpects of happineſs; they are vaniſhed, and I ſhall be miſerable! ——O my God! pity my diſtreſs, and vindicate the cauſe of my injur'd innocence! Thou art ſtill my friend; and to thee I can appeal as a witneſs of the purity of my paſſion, of the ſincerity of my duty, and the integrity of my heart — I muſt, I will confide in thy goodneſs ——

IN reflections like theſe I ſpent the greateſt part of the night, while ſleep ſeem'd to fly from my heavy eye-lids, parch'd up and drained of every tear; nor was it 'till my uſual time of riſing, that, compos'd a little by ſome pious thoughts, I fell into a ſlumber, in which I continued 'till noon. I then aroſe, extremely indiſpoſed with a violent pain in my head; when Amelia, thinking the air, which then blow'd with a pleaſing freſhneſs, might give me ſome relief, engag'd me to take a turn in the fields. But I ſhall omit the converſation which paſs'd between us, which indeed was as gloomy as poſſible. The thoughts of her own happineſs, ſo ſincere is her affection, could not prevent her bearing an engaging part in my af-

afflictions; and tho' the day is fix'd for her union with Mellifont, ſhe ſeem'd to ſympathiſe in my griefs with as real a ſorrow as if her heart likewiſe was devoid of all joy.

UPON my return I found my ſelf much more diſordered than when I went out, and therefore, by my aunt's advice, had a light dinner provided for me, and brought into my chamber, where I din'd with Amelia, and that being over, was perſuaded to try if ſleep would give me any relief; and indeed, after an hour's repoſe, found the pain in my head much abated. I then went down ſtairs, and enquiring for my aunt, was told, that ſhe was in the parlour with my father and Prudilla, who had juſt come to pay us a viſit. I heſitated at firſt to conſider whether I ſhould join them or not; but conſidering that to avoid my father's preſence would only encreaſe his opinion of my guilt, I reſolved, in ſpite of my reluctance, to bear a part in the converſation, or at leaſt to make one of the company.

As ſoon as I enter'd the parlour, I could not help taking notice of Prudilla's extraordinary complaiſance, which was the more remarkable, as ſhe had lately treated me, whenever I chanced to ſee her, with a reſerved coldneſs,

that made me fancy I had offended her; but now ſhe oppreſſed me with her careſſes, and ſeem'd to ſtrive to outdo herſelf by the exceſs of her complaiſance. My dear, ſaid ſhe, after enquiring my health, I am extremely ſorry to ſee you ſo much out of order. Really you are more indiſpoſed than you are willing to think your ſelf. I am afraid our country air don't agree with you. Don't you think ſo too my dear? I think you feel a little feveriſh; God forbid a relapſe! You are not yet recovered of a fever, that had like to have prov'd mortal. I thank you, Madam, for your concern for my health, returned I, but indeed I have no apprehenſions of that kind. Mine is only a ſlight indiſpoſition. A pain in my head and lowneſs of ſpirits, which I hope will ſoon be removed: I am pretty ſubject to theſe diſorders. You have, I think, a very delicate conſtitution, ſhe replied, but even that is a great mercy, when it has ſuch a happy effect as I obſerve it to have in you. For a perſon ſo young to have a mind fix'd upon a better world! to give ſuch early proofs of your being one of the elect!—Really, Sir, continued ſhe, you are a very happy man in being bleſs'd with a daughter who has ſo much grace and piety. Every body here are charm'd with her behaviour,

viour, and I don't think there is a perſon living, that can give her an ill word.

My father here ſhook his head, and gave a ſigh, and at the ſame time ſmil'd with an air that ſeem'd to thank her for her good opinion of me. My aunt ſmil'd too, but with this difference, that her looks did not expreſs the leaſt degree of gratitude; for the ſmile which in my father's countenance diſcovered a ſecret pleaſure, impreſſed only upon her's a ſatyrical caſt. She knew Prudilla; my father was entirely ignorant of her character; and tho' ſhe could not, as ſhe afterwards told me, dive into her motive for giving me ſuch devout panegyrics, yet ſhe could not help thinking there muſt be ſomething at the bottom of all this that ſhe ought to diſcover. She ſhrugg'd up her ſhoulders with an air of diſtruſt, her eyes ran over each of our faces, as if ſhe ſought to know, by the traces ſhe found there, whether our thoughts were conformable to her own. Meanwhile Amelia, who ſat next me, jogg'd me with her elbow, and looking in my face, bit her lips, and ſeem'd to ſay. Obſerve—what egregious flattery!

I AM glad, ſaid my father, after a moment's heſitation, to hear ſo good an account of my daughter; but the opinions of our friends

are

are not always the moſt juſt; they are blind to our foibles, and thoſe few perfections we have, they are ſo complaiſant as to magnify much above the truth. But did you never, Madam, continued he, hear the leaſt reflection upon Felicia's character? No, Sir, upon my word, not a ſyllable, I aſſure you, ſaid ſhe, with the utmoſt earneſtneſs; there is not a perſon living that can give her an ill word. She is ſo much beloved, that if the conſideration of her health, or any other reaſon ſhould engage you to take her with you to town, every body that knows her would be extremely afflicted. But if her health makes it neceſſary, it would be an injury to her to deſire her ſtay; however, we ſhould be extremely ſorry to loſe her agreeable edifying company. I don't doubt it return'd my aunt, but do you talk of removing her from the fragrant breezes of the country to the ſmoak of London, for the ſake of her health? the doctors are here all againſt you; in my opinion Felicia is much better where ſhe is. Nay, rejoin'd my father, I have no objection to the place. This houſe ſtands in a very delightful ſituation; and the bloom upon Amelia's countenance is to me a ſufficient proof of the purity of the air. I ſhall not diſpute that point with you, return'd Prudilla, all conſtitutions, you

know, are not alike, and for my part, I am ſo much convinced that London would agree better with Felicia, that I could conſent to loſe her company, for the advantage ſhe would receive from it, in recovering a more perfect ſtate of health. Don't you think, Felicia, ſaid ſhe, in a fawning tone, I ſhould make a conſiderable ſacrifice in foregoing the pleaſure of your converſation, purely for your advantage? But my good friends here don't ſeem to be of my opinion; what do you think of it? you are the beſt judge; were you not ſtronger, more briſk and lively when you lived in town than you have been ſince? I think I heard you ſay you were. No, Madam, I never ſaid any ſuch thing, replied I, in a peeviſh tone, (ſurpriſed at what could be the reaſon of her deſiring my return to London.) Did not you? I really thought you did, returned ſhe again, I am glad to find I was miſtaken; for indeed, I deſire nothing more than to be bleſs'd with the continuance of your improving converſation. I was ſaying t'other day, to a certain lady of my acquaintance, that it would be a great misfortune to us all to loſe you; for poſitively, ſaid I, a young lady of ſuch a holy and virtuous life is very hard to be met with. She was of my opinion, and tho' I don't love to

praiſe

praiſe people to their faces, I can't help ſaying, that we talk'd I don't know how long on your piety.

BUT I weary both you, Madam, and my ſelf, with relating tattle of no conſequence. Hitherto every thing went on ſmoothly. Prudilla had attempted to perſuade my father to take me with him to town; but for what reaſon I could not then imagine; her arguments however, proved unſucceſsful; when ſeeing me diſcover ſome marks of uneaſineſs, ſhe tried again to cajole me with the moſt ridiculous kind of flattery, which was the leſs inſupportable, as it employed my father's thoughts, and prevented him from entering upon a more painful ſubject. All this while every thing had the air of myſtery; but her dark deſigns were ſoon to be laid open, when the very praiſes ſhe ſo liberally beſtowed upon me were to turn to her own confuſion. I ſhould have told you that the ſervant I mentioned in my laſt, to have been ſent to Lucius, with orders to deliver the letter, which has been the cauſe of all my ſufferings, into his own hand, returned without an anſwer, he not being at home; he was therefore ſent again yeſterday at noon, and returning about three hours after, my aunt was call'd out to ſpeak to him, juſt at the time when

when Prudilla was in the midſt of her devoutly fulſome panegyrics, in which I let her proceed without interruption. My aunt's ſtay was very ſhort, for ſhe returned a few minutes after ſhe left us, with a countenance inflamed with anger; her eyes ſparkled with reſentment, and every geſture expreſs'd a rage too violent to be reſtrain'd; when ſitting down for a few minutes, to recover herſelf, ſhe peruſed a letter ſhe had in her hand, while we all kept ſilence, and, big with expectation, ſeem'd to wait for the diſcovery of ſome important ſecret. For my part, I knew not what to think; I was unacquainted with the ſervant's being ſent this laſt time to Lucius, for he was diſpatched to him, while I was in my chamber. 'Tis true, as I had nothing to reproach my ſelf with, I had no reaſon to fear my aunt's reproaches; but yet, as I had already been greatly injur'd, I could not help dreading ſome further practices againſt me; I therefore obſerved her behaviour, in order to anticipate a diſcovery, in which I did not doubt my being concerned; but I had not watched her a minute, before I gueſs'd the whole, and thought myſelf able to diſcover the cauſe of thoſe ſtrong emotions which agitated her generous ſoul. She frown'd, ſhe bit her lips, ſhe caſt a ſcornful glance at Prudilla,

Prudilla, that expreſſed both her anger and ſurprize; and then with a look of diſguſt, continued reading for half a minute longer; when, as if unable to proceed, ſhe repeated the ſame marks of averſion and aſtoniſhment: at laſt, laying the letter upon the table, and looking at Prudilla, Did you ever hear, Madam, ſaid ſhe, the leaſt reflection upon Felicia's character? Did you ever hear her virtue, her prudence, or her reputation call'd in queſtion? N——o, n——o, Madam, returned ſhe, with ſome confuſion; at the ſame time changing colour, while my aunt riveting her eyes to her's, ſeem'd to encreaſe her diſorder; but why do you aſk me that queſtion again? added ſhe, with a heſitation that ſhew'd ſhe was greatly alarmed: you don't ſuſpect me of —— of — injuring her ſo much as to ſay the contrary? You then ſincerely believe her to be perfectly virtuous, reſumed my aunt? Yes, Madam, indeed I do, ſaid ſhe, upon my word I do; as virtuous as my ſelf. Here her face, which a moment before was covered with a livid paleneſs, was now all of a flame. Yes, and a great deal more ſo, Madam, replied my aunt, or I am much miſtaken.——What do you mean, Madam? cried Prudilla, riſing, and caſting a glance at the door, have you a mind

to

to affront me? A great deal more ſo! I proteſt I don't underſtand you. —— A great deal more ſo! ——A great deal more virtuous than I am! ——Is this the manner in which you treat your friends?——ſomebody has told you that I have writ——they have told you that——a——I have ſaid ſomething to Miſs Felicia's prejudice, and you are unwiſe enough to believe them; but it is a lye, Madam, continued ſhe, raiſing her voice, an arrant lye; as great a falſhood as ever was invented. I thought, Madam, you had too good an opinion of me to ſuſpect my being guilty of ſuch a thing. But ladies, your ſervant—— your ſervant, Sir. I ſhall know how to reſent this treatment! ha! mighty pretty! more virtuous than I!

HERE ſhe flew to the door in a violent rage; poſſibly to avoid any farther explanations: while Amelia jogg'd me with her elbow, and whiſper'd; Did you obſerve the word *writ?* ſhe had like to have confeſs'd all at once; ſhe knows the contents of the letter; and that there is no name ſubſcrib'd, as well as if ſhe had read it this moment. O guilt, continued ſhe, ſhaking her head, what a fool doſt thou make of us! In reply, I only ſmil'd, and ſhook my head too—In the mean time, Prudilla was

pulling

pulling the lock, while ſhe found all her endeavours to open the door prove fruitleſs; for my aunt in coming in, foreſeeing that it would be difficult to detain her long enough to convince my father of her guilt, had wiſely turned the key, and put it in her pocket.

PRUDILLA was now enraged almoſt to a degree of madneſs, and turning about, called out aloud, Open the door, Madam. By what authority do you pretend to detain me here? Open the door, I ſay, or I'll break it open. She here thundered at it with her feet, while my aunt ſmiling cried, in a ſoft tone; Come, come, Madam, ſoftly ——— ſoftly ——— pray don't expoſe yourſelf to the deriſion of my ſervants. Pray, Madam, be adviſed; this paſſion don't become you ——— Indeed it does not; it would almoſt make one ſuſpect you of ſomething very bad. Dear Madam, be ſo good as to ſit down; you muſt not leave us ſo ſoon; upon my word we can't part with you yet. My father all this while ſeemed fill'd with the greateſt aſtoniſhment; he appear'd neither to know how to act, or what to ſay; however, reflecting at laſt, perhaps, that my aunt muſt have ſome extraordinary reaſon for this change of behaviour to a perſon, whom a quarter of an hour before

before ſhe treated with much politeneſs, he aroſe, and taking Prudilla by the hand, led her to her chair; at the ſame time intreating her to compoſe herſelf. When, ſeeing it was to no purpoſe to make any further reſiſtance, ſhe peaceably reſum'd her ſeat; and fixing her eyes upon the floor, waited with the utmoſt uneaſineſs for what my aunt had farther to add. Her looks were now dejected and melancholy, and it was eaſy to ſee the reluctance ſhe felt at being obliged, in ſpite of herſelf, to hear the mortifying things ſhe had reaſon to expect.

WHAT is the matter? cry'd my aunt, ſeeing her ſeated; you appear ſtrangely diſcompos'd; but however, I muſt have ſome farther diſcourſe with you. You have been ſaying abundance of agreeable things of my dear niece, for which ſhe is undoubtedly extremely oblig'd to you; but is ſhe really ſo virtuous, pious and diſcreet as you have repreſented her? pray tell us all you know of her, (and then putting on her ſpectacles, and taking the letter to my father out of her pocket, ſhe proceeded in a ſlow, reading tone) and don't ſhew ſuch *a vaſt deal of reluctance at com-mu-ni-cating the ſe-cret in-trigues of Miſs* Felicia. I don't know what you mean,

Madam, replied ſhe. You treat me very unworthily: very unlike a gentlewoman. Why is not this letter yours? return'd my aunt. No, Madam, ſhe replied: how ſhould it be mine? I ſcorn to uſe any body ill, much leſs Felicia. 'Twas barbarous to ſuſpect me of a crime of this nature; but we are all liable to be ſlandered. Felicia, added ſhe, wiping her eyes, why don't you take my part? I have often vindicated you on the like occaſion. I could not bear to hear any body uſe you ill; 'Tis cruel then in you to hear me treated ſo monſtrouſly on your account. I humbly thank you, Madam, returned I, tho' I cannot ſee that you could be put to much pains in vindicating my reputation, when you have never heard, as you ſay, the leaſt ill word of me. This produced a general ſmile, only Amelia, delighted with the thought of ſpeedily ſeeing my innocence cleared up, in the preſence of my father, could not forbear indulging the ill-natured pleaſure of encreaſing Prudilla's confuſion, by a triumphant laugh. When my aunt reſum'd, with that ſuperiority in her air, which conſcious virtue gives us over the meanneſs of detected guilt, Come, come, Madam, theſe ſubterfuges and low evaſions ſerve only to ſet your crimes in a more glaring light:

Nor

Nor do I expect to hear any thing elſe but ſuch abſurd contradictions, while you endeavour to clear your ſelf of thoſe baſe and ſcandalous actions, which it is in my power to prove againſt you. This letter, this vile, this infamous and malicious letter, which equally ſhews the abandon'd character and ignorance of the writer, is yours; I know it is; ——— nor will any thing you can ſay perſuade me to believe the contrary.———'Tis your hand———and it exactly agrees with another I have here, that diſcovers the motive of your actions, and lays open and naked the wickedneſs and deformity of your corrupted ſoul. Is it for this you affect to appear virtuous, to practiſe the blackeſt vices with a better grace? to give an innocent mind all the diſtreſs, and ſhame, and ſorrow, which only a guilty one, like yours, ought to ſuffer? To eſtrange the affections of an indulgent parent from an only child, the delight of his life, the object of his deareſt hopes and fondeſt wiſhes? To throw a damp over all his proſpects of joy, by repreſenting her as guilty, as a diſgrace and reproach to his name, whom he has juſtly admir'd and lov'd for her virtues. Bluſh, Madam, if you have any ſenſe of ſhame, or the leaſt degree of that extraordinary modeſty, to which you make ſuch mighty pretences; bluſh

bluſh, and look into your ſelf with horror. O my ſtars! for one of your years to attempt to delude a young man ——— a very young man———and to attempt to frighten him to a compliance with your leud deſires, by threatning to deprive him of his miſtreſs! What impudence!———And to dare to attempt it too!——— to attempt it by ſuch baſe methods! ———But to finiſh your ſhame, and convince my brother, that what I have ſaid is but too true, I'll read this vile letter.

HERE, putting on her ſpectacles, ſhe began in the ſlow tone of a perſon reading a hand almoſt unintelligible,

Unkind Lucius,

IF I deſired to meet you in the dark laſt night, it was only to ſave my bluſhes.—How modeſt this was! interrupted Amelia, while my aunt proceeded, *come to-night, and I'll refuſe you nothing*—

PRUDILLIA had ſat all this while in a ſtupid kind of amazement, with a countenance on which was painted all the horror, and rage, and mortified dejection, that guilt and unmask'd hypocriſy could give it. Her mouth was open, every feature diſtorted, and her whole frame trembling and convulſed. She continued unable to ſpeak, unable to interrupt what gave her

her ſuch pain to hear. But now a ſudden impulſe of ſhame made her ſtart from her ſeat, and ſnatching part of the letter out of my aunt's hand, in a violent paſſion, tore it to pieces: crying, This is too much, Madam; nobody could bear it: ——— It is a forgery, ——— a curſed forgery. While my aunt, ſmiling with an air of contempt, caſt her eyes upon a ſmall piece ſhe held faſt in her fingers, which preſenting to my father, he read the following words, which I have now before me,

fuſe my requeſt or tell
w to be reueng'd on your
acquaint her father with
Your bluſhin

You are ready now, Madam, to wonder how I could think of giving you this unintelligible fragment, under which was remaining the three firſt letters of her name, for I can't now be ſuppos'd to be in a diſpoſition to puzzle you with riddles; but however inſignificant it may appear, it not only ſerv'd to convince my father, that the hand was exactly the ſame as that in which the letter was written, that had given us ſo much uneaſineſs, but aſſiſted my aunt in recollecting the whole lines, of which theſe were a part; which ſhe might eaſily do, as it was hardly half an hour ſince ſhe had read the

letter entire; and then indeed, they appear'd of the greateſt conſequence, ſince they explain'd the motive of this dark proceeding.

MY father having compared this piece with the letter on the table, return'd it to my aunt, who looking at it with attention, after a moment's conſideration, told us, ſhe remember'd the lines ran thus:

BUT if you refuſe my fond requeſt, or tell any body what you know I would have a ſecret, I know how to be reveng'd on your idol, that you doat ſo much upon, and will poſitively acquaint her father, with every thing you would hide from him: Your bluſhing, &c.

THESE I aſſure you, continued my aunt, were exactly her words. O monſtrous! cried Prudilla, throwing away the paper, which ſhe had tore into ſmall pieces, monſtrous indeed! what vile inſinuations! that I ſhould be ſuſpected of ſuch crimes! but my piety and modeſty are too well known for any body to believe it. I charg'd with thinking of a fellow! an odious, naſty fellow! But I'll ſtill be reveng'd: I will make him ſmart for it. I ——— that never had an indecent thought in my life! I think of a filthy fellow! no, no, Madam, my reputation for chaſtity is too well eſtabliſhed for any body to imagine it. It is a lye; and for what I know, you,

Madam,

Madam, may have a hand in it: but I can ſee through your plots. This, Sir, is a contrivance between Lucius and your wicked daughter, whom I never ſuſpected 'till this moment; they would be reveng'd becauſe I was enough your friend to oppoſe her marrying ſuch a villain, ſuch a debauch'd, leud villain. And ſo having my letter there, they muſt needs counterfeit my hand. Here ſhe forced a ridiculous, affected laugh, and then proceeded, La! Miſs, I did not think you had been ſo cunning. But you ſhall know that my character is above cenſure.

It would be impoſſible, Madam, to deſcribe all the ſtrange contortions, the convulſive geſtures, and affected airs, with which this ſpeech was utter'd. She had at firſt the very look of a fury; ſhe grinn'd, ſhe ſtar'd, ſhe ſtamp'd and walk'd about the room, fluttering her fan, while her countenance, aswell asevery action, expreſs'd the ſwell of rage, the ſting of conſcious ſhame, and all the mortifying pangs that could diſtort and rack a corrupted heart, aſham'd of being diſcovered, too proud ingenuouſly to confeſs its guilt, and too much heated by paſſion to attend the little decorums of her character. But at laſt, thinking, in the heat of her rage, ſhe might throw all upon Lucius and

me, and perhaps perſuade my father, at leaſt, that ſhe was ignorant of thoſe crimes which touched her moſt to the quick, ſhe chang'd her part, and ſwallowed up by the thoughts of revenge, forgot that by this contradictory behaviour ſhe took the moſt effectual way of deſtroying at once her character, and diſcovering the deformity of her black, abandon'd ſoul. But ſhe was incapable of reflection, and hurried away by a torrent of paſſion, catch'd at the firſt relief that offer'd; a relief that made her forget her ſhame, and feel a ſhadowy dawn of triumph. Good God! can there be worſe miſeries than thoſe which ariſe from guilt? what deſtruction does it occaſion, while its very reliefs plunge us into more aggravated wretchedneſs, into deeper horrors!

My father now unable to contain his indignation aroſe, and damping the triumphant ſmile, which juſt began to quiver on her countenance, by a ſtern and contemptuous glance, Madam, cried he, don't think it in your power to impoſe upon me by theſe low artifices; I can ſee through all theſe doublings, the weak ſubterfuges of an abandon'd mind. If my daughter has no crimes but what ſuch a vile hypocrite as you can reproach her with, I ſhall do her the juſtice to think her innocent.

WHAT a beam of joy, at theſe words, ſhot through my ſoul. My aunt now aroſe, and opening the door, cried, Begone, Madam, for your brother's ſake I ſhall be more tender of your reputation than you deſerve, but never preſume again to enter into my houſe. Go, and bluſh in ſecret. ——— I am ſorry that ever I knew you. Here Prudilla left us, hanging down her head, and muttering ſomething we could not perfectly underſtand. ——

BUT I find I muſt break off. When I began this letter, I fancied it would be very ſhort; but I am got, before I am aware, to my uſual length. Sure I muſt be an extravagant lover of writing, to ſend you ſuch long epiſtles; the poſt is ready to ſet out, and I have but juſt time to repeat my aſſurances that I am, and ſhall ever be,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

Moſt affectionate Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER XX.

AS ſoon, Madam, as Prudilla was gone, elated with the thoughts of what had paſs'd, and charm'd with the delightful proſpect of a ſpeedy reconciliation with my father, I was going to embrace this favourable moment of throwing my ſelf at his feet, and begging to be reſtored to his eſteem; but I no ſooner roſe up in order to make theſe ſubmiſſions, than, ſtopp'd by the pride of virtue, I reflected that I had already made too many attempts to ſoften his unjuſt anger; and that, if he was now convinc'd of my innocence, it did not become me to entreat, for what I had a right to demand from him. Shall I, like a criminal, ſaid I to my ſelf, ſupplicate for forgiveneſs? ——— In what have I offended? ——— It is for guilt to ſtoop ſo low, innocence has no need of ſtooping. At this thought I ſat down again, and my father and my aunt, ſtill warm with reſentment, being now ſeated too, could not help making ſome reflections on the odious deformity of Prudilla's mind.

WHAT an abandon'd hypocrite! cried my father, with a look ſtill diſturb'd by paſſion, what a vile incendiary! but how ridiculouſly inconſiſtent

inconſiſtent was her conduct! I confeſs I am not able to think it, in any inſtance, agreeable to common ſenſe; nor can I determine which is the moſt remarkable, her folly, or her wickedneſs. What a heap of contradictions! of abſurd, palpable contradictions! Really, Sir, replied my aunt, I can't think her ſo inconſiſtent with her ſelf as you do; her artifices appear to me all of a piece. Thinking Felicia an obſtacle to her criminal deſires, ſhe endeavours to prevail with you to ſend for her up to town; you unexpectedly come to ſearch into the truth of what ſhe had alledged againſt your daughter; when dreading a diſcovery that might prove fatal to her reputation, ſhe comes hoping to clear herſelf of ſuſpicion, by contradicting every thing ſhe had ſaid in the letter, and at the ſame time colouring over her artifices by the groſſeſt flattery, endeavours to perſuade us, that our air don't agree with her conſtitution; and thus, by a concern for her health, and an affectation of the ſtricteſt friendſhip, ſhe flatter'd herſelf with carrying on her grand deſign, which is ſtill the removal of your daughter. And, as to the reſt of her conduct, continued my aunt, it is eaſy to be accounted for, from the ſtrong perturbations of a guilty mind, terrified at the thoughts of

a diſcovery, and therefore in too great a ferment to attend to the nice decorums which were neceſſary to carry on ſuch a difficult deſign, and too much perplexed to ſecure herſelf by the ſubtle aids of a ready imagination. She affects to appear a lady of the ſtricteſt piety, and moſt unblemiſh'd ſanctity of life; ſhe is the cenſor of the neighbourhood; and not the ſmalleſt fault can eſcape her notice; judge then, how hard it muſt be to carry on this diſguiſe when ſo cloſely attack'd, and how terrible the apprehenſion of being ſeen in her true deformity.

RIGHT, right, cried my father, ſhe is more ſubtle than I imagin'd, at leaſt I ought to think ſo, added he, in a tender tone, in vindication of my too eaſy credulity. ——— I have then injur'd my Felicia! ——— I could hear no more———I flew into his arms, while he, ſeeing my intention, aroſe and ſtepp'd forwards to receive me. What a delightful, painful moment!

O my dear friend, your can't conceive even a diſtant idea of half the ſatisfaction and joy I felt at this inſtant. Something like the voice of nature huſh'd my troubled ſoul into a peaceful tranſport, into a rapture leſs tumultuous, though not leſs pleaſing than that of two meeting

ing lovers. My life ſeem'd to run up to its ſource, and to return back again in a ſweeter and more tranquil ſtream. I embraced my father as if I had not ſeen him 'till that moment, as if that was the happy inſtant of his arrival. Every care, every trouble was then forgot; my preſent joy took up all my thoughts, and all theſe thoughts were extaſy. My father, having tenderly embraced me, with the affection of a parent who had found a child more than doubly loſt, while nature riſing in his eyes, ſwell'd into a tear, and roll'd down his awful cheeks, ſeated me in a chair that was next his own, and taking hold of my hand, My dear Felicia, ſaid he, while all the parent guſh'd in his eyes, I have dearly ſuffer'd in too eaſily believing thee guilty; but canſt thou forgive the diſquiet I have given thee, and overlook this weak credulity that —— Dear Sir, cried I, interrupting him, unable to hold out any longer, and almoſt aſham'd of his condeſcenſion, I can't bear to hear you. Is this the language of a father to a daughter? No, Sir, it ſhall never be yours to me; you oppreſs me too much by this unmerited goodneſs. The terrible diſquiets we have both felt, muſt be plac'd to Prudilla's account. But I heartily forgive her; ſhe has been ſufficiently mortified:

we will think of her then no more. My conduct, my reſignation to your will, ſhall ſufficiently ſhew how little I deſerve her ſlanders. You ſhall know me to be dutiful; I will obey you in every thing you can deſire.

HERE he preſſed my hand, and after a ſhort ſilence, turning to my aunt, ask'd who the perſon was, on whom I had plac'd my affections. He is, ſaid ſhe, (for here, Madam, I can't help repeating her words, ſhe talk'd ſo charmingly) he is a young gentleman, of a family not inferior to ours; but this is a trifling circumſtance, when compared with his perſonal virtues. He has a noble dignity of ſentiment, a generous and humane heart, a delicacy of ſoul that renders him equally beloved and admired. This, Sir, is the character I give of him; and I don't queſtion, Sir, but you'll find it ſtrictly juſt. If you enquire abroad, you will hear too of temperance, affability, an engaging temper, and, in ſhort, of all the virtues you would wiſh to ſee in a ſon-in-law. I am ſorry to hear it, returned then my father; it will be ſo much the harder for my daughter to comply with what I have to propoſe to her. I have engaged my word to ſollicit her conſent to marry the ſon of one of my moſt intimate friends; and have aſſured him, that ſhe pays

ſo

ſo ſtrict an obedience to my will, that he need not doubt of my ſucceſs. He has a fortune ſuperior to hers, a circumſtance that I cannot overlook, nor does he want any qualification to entitle him to the character of a worthy man, or a gentleman. Let me ſee now, Felicia, added he, addreſſing himſelf to me, that you can obey my inclinations rather than your own; for I will not do you the injury to imagine, that you have ſo far engaged your ſelf without my conſent, as to be unable to go back. Sir, replied I, with my eyes fix'd on the floor, I am all obedience. I never propoſed to marry without your approbation; but let me at leaſt beg, that I might have time to conquer my heart, and ſubdue my rebellious inclinations. I will ſtudy to obey you, and do all in my power to render my ſelf worthy your eſteem. This my dear, returned he, is all I deſire. It would indeed be a ſhock to decency and virtue, as well as the greateſt injury to the man thou wouldſt endeavour to render happy, wert thou forced into his arms, while thy tendereſt affections were placed upon another. But time, and the perfections of the gentleman I have choſe for thee, will, I hope, make that deſirable change, which will be neceſſary to compleat the felicity of you both.

COULD our happy reconciliation be concluded with a ſubject more capable of giving a damp to my riſing joys, and to the exquiſite ſatisfactions of filial affection; My heart, tho' diſſolv'd in duty, felt the whole force of this laſt demand, and at the ſame inſtant that I gave up all power over myſelf, and conſented to forſake my dear Lucius, he appeared preſent to my mind, in all his charms, in all the radiant charms of virtue, yet drooping under his unhappy lot, while the tender languiſhment of his ſoul ſeem'd to reproach my too eaſy compliance. But what could I do? could I refuſe any thing to a father, who had a right to demand every thing from me? No, that was impoſſible, I was then in a diſpoſition to pay him the moſt rigorous obedience. Nor indeed could he have made any requeſt that would have given me equal pain to grant: for wealth and ſplendour, and all the alluring gaities of life appear but trifles, when compar'd with the more important intereſts of our hearts. Love, in the very inſtant when I endeavoured to give up the ſoft, the tender paſſion, reſumed its empire, and, in ſpite of all my reſolution, flow'd in upon my ſoul, and embitter'd the generous efforts of my duty; nor could I thus formally reſign the extatic thought of ſpending

my life with Lucius, without feeling ſome of the moſt cruel pangs. However, endeavouring to collect my ſelf as much poſſible, by recalling the pleaſing ideas of our reconciliation, I aſſumed an air of eaſe and reſignation; but as this was a ſituation very difficult to ſupport long together, and as I found my ſelf ſtill diſordered with the pain in my head, I ſeiz'd the firſt opportunity of retiring to my chamber; where, my ſupper being brought me, I went to bed.

I SHALL not, Madam, attempt to deſcribe the oppoſite paſſions I had to ſtruggle with, now I was retir'd from company, and was at liberty to indulge all the various reflections that intruded themſelves upon my mind. It is ſufficient to ſay, that I felt a confuſed and diſturbed mixture of pleaſure and pain. But whether the reliefs I found from the conſideration of having regained the favour of an indulgent parent, together with the thoughts of the joy he felt at finding me ſtill innocent, were more powerful than all the cauſe I had for an uneaſineſs; or whether my ſpirits ſinking under the pleaſing flow of thoſe dutiful affections which I had indulg'd without reſtraint, made me more heavy than uſual, I ſoon fell into a delightful ſlumber which laſted 'till morning, when I found my-

ſelf

ſelf perfectly recovered from every indiſpoſition: but the moment I open'd my eyes, the dear idea of my lover returned again upon my mind; while I recollected his air, his words, his geſtures, the purity of his ſoul, and the ſublimity of his virtues, all had a thouſand winning graces; pleaſing in the review, yet painful in the idea of their being nothing to me, ſince I muſt forget to admire, forget to love this dear engaging man, whom my heart repreſented as all lovely.

I was in this ſituation, Madam, when I wrote you my laſt letter, which I began as ſoon as I had ſlipp'd on my clothes, and which took me up great part of the day in writing; and indeed, tho' I then fill'd two ſheets of paper with my ſcribbling, I ought in ſtrict propriety to have carried it thus far. But my adventures come in ſuch ſwift ſucceſſion that I can't pretend to keep pace with them. I have a very intereſting ſcene to relate, and as I foreſee it will take up too much time for me to give it you now entire, I chuſe to defer it 'till my next.

WITH my moſt humble reſpects to his Lordſhip, I am,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

DEAR MADAM,

I Had ſuch a variety of painful and agreeable things remaining, when I concluded my laſt, that it was with the extremeſt reluctance I found my ſelf obliged, either to break off, or to give you ſuch a looſe general account of the changes in my affairs, as would be entirely unaffecting; or elſe, after having rais'd your curioſity, to break off, and give you the pain of waiting ſeveral days in a tedious ſuſpence. But I have now an opportunity of continuing my ſtory, without any of thoſe inconveniences.

THE day after that, in which I was reſtored to my father's favour, and loſt to the pleaſing joys of love, and all the flattering delights I had form'd an idea of, the ſweets of the moſt innocent ſympathies, and the uniform tranſports of a bliſsful union of ſouls; the day after this important one, I ſay, I ſcarcely ſaw my father 'till the evening: for having ſoon after I aroſe in the morning, tenderly enquired into the ſtate of my health, he left us to ſpend the day with ſome neighbouring gentlemen. Upon his return we were all ſurprized to find him ruffled and diſturb'd by paſſion; and naturally

enquiring

enquiring what was the cauſe of his uneaſineſs, how great was my aſtoniſhment and concern to hear him tell me, that he had received the groſſeſt inſults from Lucius's father! 'tis true ſaid he, he was diſordered with wine; but it is alſo true too, that he has affronted me in the preſence of ſeveral gentlemen, in a manner that I can't help reſenting. As I had given him no cauſe of offence, every body took my part; and, as is uſual on ſuch occaſions, freely gave me an account of the ſeveral debaucheries of his life; he is guilty of every extravagance, and is, they tell me, juſt upon the brink of ruin. Can I think of being allied to ſuch a wretched family! No, child, I muſt repeat my requeſt, that you would never more entertain the leaſt thought of his unhappy ſon.

THO' I had before hardly any hopes of ever obtaining Lucius, yet I could not hear this repeated injunction, without feeling a great addition of pain. My father was now confirm'd in his oppoſition to my deſires, and had ſome reaſon to be averſe to our union. Could I then entertain the leaſt diſtant thought of a change in my affairs? I durſt not even think it poſſible. I had not the leaſt glimmering hope of ever being happy, unleſs I could eraſe from my heart, the tender impreſſions I found there of

of my dear Lucius, and that ſeem'd as great an impoſſibility as that I ſhould ever obtain him. I was ſo much ſtruck with this thought, that I was hardly able to make an anſwer, and only replied, I am extremely ſorry for it, Sir; but if you knew Lucius, you would be far from thinking him guilty of his father's crimes, of which he is perfectly incapable: but I ſhall ſay no more, I will ſtudy to obey you.

My aunt, perhaps thinking this an improper time to vindicate my lover, as my father was not a little diſturb'd with paſſion, ſeem'd to avoid entring into the ſubject; but Mellifont, who as he was upon the point of being united to Amelia, had been fully let into the ſtate of our affairs, and who was now preſent, could not help vindicating his friend, with a warmth that greatly increaſed my eſteem for him; and which I ſaw, by Amelia's eyes, was not much leſs pleaſing to her; but all he could ſay had but little effect upon my father; his moſt forcible arguments could not perſuade him to believe, but that the vices of a parent muſt have ſome effect on the minds of his children. 'Tis true, he was not now in a diſpoſition to hear reaſon, eſpecially on a ſubject ſo oppoſite to the tumultuous ſtate of his own mind, which had fix'd prepoſſeſſions almoſt unconquerable.

But

But he was ſoon in a better diſpoſition; Lucius himſelf removed all his prejudices, and convinced him of his innocence, and in a happy moment inſpired him with the higheſt eſteem.

THE next morning, as I lay longer than uſual, I breakfaſted in bed; a thing very uncommon in this part of the world; where, as I have told you, it is not unuſual for fine ladies to ariſe with the ſun; but I had ſcarcely drank my chocolate, when Amelia came running into my chamber, to inform me that Lucius was juſt come, and that he was now in a cloſe converſation with my aunt. Seiz'd with a ſudden flutter and perturbation of ſpirits, I leap'd out of bed and ſlip'd on my clothes, with as much ſpeed as poſſible; at the ſame time asking her abundance of queſtions all in a breath; as whether he had ſeen my father? if he had informed him who he was; what paſſed between them? and ſeveral other things I was deſirous of knowing: and ſo great was my impatience to be informed of theſe particulars, that I could hardly ſtay for an anſwer. I would be informed of every thing at once, and was almoſt angry at her making me loſe the time of asking her. And was not this eagerneſs very natural, Madam? Indeed I could not help it; I acted merely from inſtinct. It was my heart

that

that wanted to be informed, and the ſtrange emotion I felt there cauſed ſuch a ſwift ſucceſſion of ideas, that every moment's delay ſeemed an age. Amelia talks with as much fluency as moſt people I ever converſed with, yet I thought ſhe dream'd out her ſyllables to an unnatural length; and though I was never dreſs'd ſo quick in my life, I could not be perſuaded that I ever was half ſo long about it. But I do not conſider, that while I am deſcribing my own impatience, I am ſtill encreaſing yours. She told me that my father, not knowing who he was, had behaved with the politeneſs due to a ſtranger, and upon my aunt's ſaying he was one of her beſt friends, had even gone ſo far as to tell him, that he ſhould be glad of the honour of his acquaintance, and that it would be a particular favour, if now he was there, he would give him a few hours of his company.

WHAT a happy omen! cried I——Is it poſſible? —— Are you ſure he ſaid ſo?——Well, and what elſe?——Come, quick, my Dear—With what an extaſy were theſe words uttered! What elſe, Madam, returned ſhe, what ſhould he ſay elſe? —— He ſaid nothing more I aſſure you. You will eaſily imagine that Lucius accepted the propoſal. Well, but my dear Amelia, returned I, with the ſame rapidity

dity, are you ſure you have told me all?——— Come, begin again, and don't forget the leaſt particular. Here Amelia, with a ſmile did as I deſired; only adding, that my father ſeem'd agreeably ſurpriz'd at Lucius's graceful manner of expreſſing himſelf. Did he? cried I, with a freſh tranſport; how could you forget ſuch a charming circumſtance? But what then were Lucius's words?———

THUS I employed my time 'till I was ready to go down ſtairs, when reflecting that what I had conſidered as a ſubject of joy, was but an airy viſion, a deluſion of fancy; ſince the eaſe and politeneſs of my father's behaviour to Lucius proceeded only from his not knowing him. My fears now returned with double weight, while my heart ach'd and flut'er'd with a painful palpitation, which encreaſed at every ſtep I took, as I drew nearer my father and my lover. In what a terrible ſuſpenſe thought I, is poor Lucius! how will he be able to make the important diſcovery? important! thought I again, how is it important? ſince it will only raiſe my father's reſentment. And the next moment, I imagin'd I ſaw him pale and trembling, at hearing my father's ſtern command to forbear his addreſſes.—But theſe torturing reflections were in a great meaſure put an

end

end to by my entering the room, where Lucius, my father and my aunt were in full converſation on ſome indifferent ſubjects. Lucius, the moment he ſaw me, aroſe with a bluſh, and bowing low, ſeated himſelf again, and continued the converſation. What a ſtrange concourſe of wild and incoherent ideas now diſtracted my heart! my ſoul, filled with a confuſed agony, was ſcarcely able to attend to any diſtinct ſenſations. I was bewilder'd in a maze of thought. What a ſtrange ſituation of mind! Is this the laſt time, ſaid I to my ſelf with a ſigh, as ſoon as I was capable of giving the leaſt order to my ideas, the laſt, the very laſt time of my ſeeing this dear man? the laſt time that I ſhall hear his voice! that voice that has ſo often awak'd all the powers of my ſoul to harmony and love! that voice which I have ſo often heard with rapture, while, as if all ear, I have hung upon his lips, and liſten'd to the tender, melodious accents of his tongue! Oh! how ſhall I ſupport his abſence? how tear myſelf from this dear perſon for ever! never more to converſe with my fellow mind! never more to hear and ſee his heart ſpeak to me. To forget him! to forget the dear ſympathies of love!——to be ignorant of what paſſes in his breaſt!—— How hard the task!

Oh

Oh duty! how rigorous are thy demands!—— But 'tis reſolved, and I will, I will obey.

HAD I not been ſeated in the darkeſt part of the room, and at the fartheſt diſtance from my father, it would have been impoſſible for him not to have taken notice of the diſorder theſe cruel thoughts imprinted on my countenance. But I was ſoon diverted from theſe gloomy images, by Lucius, who trembling, with a ſoft and timorous air, chang'd all at once the ſubject that had emplo'd the attention of all in the company but me; and fixing his eyes ſteadily on my father, You have profeſſed an eſteem for me, Sir, ſaid he, which neither my merit, nor the ſmall time I have been in your company, can juſtify. I am quite unknown to you: you are ignorant that I have rais'd my ambitious hopes to the happineſs of being allied to you: but however you receive this confeſſion, do me the juſtice to believe, that I have never preſum'd to harbour a thought of obtaining your daughter without your conſent; I love her too tenderly to injure you, or to think of depriving her of your affection, by perſuading her to forget her duty. You alone have a right to diſpoſe of her; and, Oh! Sir, it is in your power to render me happy or miſerable. With what pain did he utter

utter theſe words! and with what an earneſt beſeeching look were they concluded! As for my father, the moment Lucius, ſoftening his voice, began to change the diſcourſe, he ſtarted, and viewing him with an earneſtneſs mixed with ſurprize, ſeemed to hear him with patience, and even let him conclude without once attempting to interrupt him; while I, ſwallow'd up in attention, felt for ſome time a ſuſpenſion of all thought, of all ſenſation and idea. My ſoul ſeem'd a void, every paſſion was huſh'd, and every power waited for the next words to teach them how to act, and to ſet all in motion again. When my father reply'd, I ſhall neither take upon me to enquire how far you have carried this regard for my authority, nor whether you are worthy of her affection. She is very dear to me, and I have choſe a husband for her every way capable of making her happy. You will oblige me then, if you promiſe never to ſee her more. Well, Sir, I cannot complain, returned he, with a trembling voice; ———this is no more than I ought to have expected.———I muſt loſe the lovely Felicia then for ever!—Well, you ſhall be obey'd—whatever it coſt me you ſhall!——— here he pauſed, as if unable to proceed, and then continued, No, I'll never be an obſtacle to

her happineſs; ſhe ſhall never more be made uneaſy by my preſence, nor tempted to diſobey you, by knowing my deſpair.

O! Madam, it was impoſſible for me to ſupport the effects of ſuch generous, painful ſentiments; a flood of tender ſorrow pour'd into my heart, my head grew giddy, a thick film in an inſtant overcaſt my eyes, and trembling, and ſick, while every thing ran round, I ſeem'd ſinking into death. My aunt perceived me, while my head was yet ſupported by the back of my chair, and my looks ſteadily fix'd on Lucius, when obſerving my paleneſs, and crying out, Felicia is fainting! ſhe ran to ſupport me in her arms, juſt as I was ready to fall upon the floor. It was a conſiderable time, I believe, before I was brought to my ſelf, but being ſtill very ſick and low ſpirited, my aunt adviſ'd me to be laid upon my bed, when Amelia ſupporting me by one arm, and one of the ſervants by the other, I was convey'd into my chamber, where I remain'd for ſome time, in a ſtate little better than that of entire inſenſibility, during which, my aunt was ſo kind as to keep me company, ſitting all the while by my bed-ſide with a bottle of ſalts in her hand.

As ſoon as I had perfectly recovered my ſenſes, and began to look about me, the firſt queſtion

queſtion I ask'd was, if Lucius was gone? but my aunt could not ſatisfy me. I then deſired her to tell me how he behaved, and what impreſſion my diſorder had upon him; but avoided anſwering my queſtion, by ſaying, Pray, my dear, don't make theſe uſeleſs enquiries.—As you muſt now endeavour to forget him, it would have but an unhappy effect to ſtore your mind with thoughts that would only increaſe the difficulty of conquering your affection. But ſhe had ſcarcely made this prudent reply, when Amelia came running into my room, and embracing me with an extaſy of joy, O my dear, cried ſhe, with the tears ſtarting from her eyes, Lucius has conquer'd; my uncle ſubmits, and gives you up to your lover!—It is impoſſible! cried I, fill'd with an amazement that almoſt deprived me again of my juſt recover'd ſenſes. It is true! —— it is true! I aſſure you it is true! reſum'd ſhe, with the ſame tranſport. Here my aunt check'd her friendly ardor, which ſhe fear'd might overpower my ſpirits, and forcing me to take a glaſs of wine and drops, to prepare me for what I had to hear, deſired Amelia to relate every thing that had paſs'd; when, ſeizing her hand, I entreated her to make haſte, but not to forget the leaſt particular. She ſmil'd at my eagerneſs, and

with what ſatisfaction in her looks, which always appears when a good mind has it in its power to confer an extraordinary joy, without any farther ceremony, began thus:

THE moment my mamma ran to prevent your falling from your chair, Lucius caſt his eyes upon you too; but he no ſooner beheld you, my dear, in that frightful ſituation, than he appeared in a diſorder very little different from yours; but immediately recollecting himſelf, he joined with my uncle in uſing all his endeavours to recover you. He ran himſelf to fetch water, and gave it to your father, who ſprinkled your face; he ran for more; he flew into the dining-room for my mother's ſmelling-bottle, then for ſome drops. In ſhort we had no need of any of the ſervants, he himſelf was more active than they all put together could have been; and did a thouſand mean offices for you, if any thing can be called mean that is done for a perſon in ſuch a ſituation. His life, his happineſs, his all ſeem'd at ſtake. And though he could not have the leaſt hopes of obtaining you, his looks expreſs'd a tenderneſs and ſolicitude that I could not help thinking even exceeded your father's. Tho' he durſt not approach you with the ſame freedoms as he did, yet he ſtood behind him, with his eyes fix'd on your

faded

faded cheeks, while the tears ran down his, that with his fright wanted little of being as pale as yours; but the inſtant your colour began a little to return, his came in proportion; and as his apprehenſions vaniſh'd, his countenance entirely chang'd. You opened your eyes; we ſaid you would recover; he was in a freſh tranſport, and ſeem'd at that moment to have forgot that that was to be the laſt time of his ſeeing you. Ah! my dear Felicia, continued ſhe ſmiling, do you think Mellifont, in the ſame caſe, would have expreſs'd an equal tenderneſs for me? ———I can hardly believe it.

O! MY dear Lucius! cried I (ſhedding ſome extatic tears) but proceed. Well, reſumed ſhe, as ſoon as I came from helping you up ſtairs, having asked me how you did, he turn'd to my uncle, and giving him a ſupplicating look, ſince I muſt never more, ſaid he with a ſigh, behold your dear Felicia, permit me, Sir, to ſtay 'till ſhe is come to herſelf. I don't ask to ſee her again, but—Enough, Sir, returned my uncle, you may ſtay and welcome; and I take this opportunity of thanking you for the ſervice we have received from you, in giving us your aſſiſtance: it was generous, and what, after the declaration I had made you, I

had not the leaſt reaſon to expect; but inſtead of being reproached I was to be obliged. My ſiſter has done you juſtice in ſaying you have a mind very different from your father's, and therefore I believe you will not vindicate his extravagancies; and it is his character, more than any diſparity of circumſtances, that makes me averſe to your having my daughter; but if you are an honeſt man you will not juſtify him. The ſavage brute had——Who, Sir? what my father? cried Lucius; while I was ſurpriz'd to hear the perſon who had hitherto ſpoke with ſuch ſubmiſſive reſpect, now aſſume a tone ſo reſolute and lofty. Yes, your father! returned my uncle, as loud as he. He inſulted me —— vilely inſulted me, in the preſence of ſeveral gentlemen, who turned him out of the room. They gave me his character, related many of his outrages, and convinced me, that he is a debauch'd, abandon'd fellow —— a villain. —— My father a debauch'd, abandon'd fellow! reſum'd Lucius, in the ſame tone! My father a villain. Nothing but your near relation to Felicia could prevent my reſenting the opprobrious epithets. Heavens! my father call'd a villain, and can I hear it with patience? Oh! Sir, continued he, ſoftening his voice, ſpare my father! Why, is

it

it not true? returned my uncle——Is he not my father? cried Lucius interrupting him: Oh Sir! can I have ſo little delicacy, ſo little ſenſe of duty, or honour, as not to reſent ſuch language? Can I be a ſon, and yet ſo void of filial affection, as not to feel my heart riſe with indignation, and every paſſion ſwell to juſtify my father? Then you juſtify your father, replied again my uncle. I beg, returned Lucius, you would not preſs this ſubject. You are Felicia's father, and he is mine; I would therefore preſerve a reſpect for you both. Mine has, I confeſs, his faults, but he has his virtues too. His faults I would conceal from all the world; I would bury them in eternal oblivion; I would blot them even from my own remembrance; I would wipe them from my thoughts, to ſave my ſelf the prepoſterous ſhame of bluſhing for a parent. But yet, whatever he may deſerve, I am ſure I don't deſerve to hear him treated ſo.

My uncle here, continued Amelia, ſat fix'd in admiration, while friendſhip and ſurprize were mingled in his looks; he was ſilent; he ſeem'd at a loſs for an anſwer, when at laſt, giving Lucius his hand, Your ſentiments are admirable, Sir, cried he, and I can't help thinking him very happy, in having in ſo

generous a ſon, ſo good an advocate. I beg pardon for my want of delicacy in ſhocking yours. Here heſitating a moment, with a friendly diſorder in his countenance, that ſhew'd him ſtopp'd by an effecting thought, which he waited to indulge, he reſum'd, But if a father who has taken ſo little care of his family, can inſpire in a ſon ſuch tender duty, ſuch noble friendſhip, how great would be that ſon's affection, had he one who employ'd the whole bent of his ſoul in contributing to his felicity? You can't conceive, my dear Felicia, continued ſhe, how feelingly theſe words were expreſs'd. Lucius himſelf, notwithſtanding his diſappointed hopes, ſeem'd extremely moved with them, when with a colour as red as ſcarlet, he haſtily replied, 'Twas in you, Sir, that I hop'd to have found ſuch a father; but why did I hope it? that is now impoſſible, I ſhall ſee your dear, your charming Felicia no more. 'Tis true my preſumption in daring to love her is inexcuſable; but I will try whether abſence and philoſophy can teach me to conquer my paſſion. If they cannot, I muſt be unhappy. Here he aroſe with a viſible confuſion in his looks, and added with a ſigh, Pray ſend to know how ſhe does, for I muſt retire.

LUCIUS

LUCIUS having taken a turn or too about the room, with a diſorder that I don't know how to expreſs, but which ſeemed to ariſe from his thinking he had ſaid too much, by confeſſing the pleaſure he had felt in hoping for a father of my uncle's virtues; (for thoſe words ſeemed to break rather from his heart than his tongue) Lucius, I would ſay, having taken a turn about the room, and finding my uncle make no reply to his deſire of knowing how you did, opened the door, ſaying, Your ſervant, Sir; I wiſh Felicia happy. I will ſend my ſelf, to know if ſhe is recovered. When ſeeing him going, your father aroſe, deſired him to ſtay a little longer, and told him, he could not part with him ſo ſuddenly. Upon this your lover returned, and they both being again ſeated, after a ſhort ſilence (for your father, my dear, continued ſhe appeared buried in thought) he reſumed, I confeſs, Sir, I admire your virtues, and am perſuaded we ſhall part upon much better terms; pray let me know the circumſtances of your family, and whether you have any eſtate in your own hands. Here I took upon me to reply, and endeavoured to give him the characters of Sophronia and Marilla, which I told my uncle I could do with a much better grace than Lucius, as his modeſty might be

offended, ſhould he do juſtice to perſons whoſe merit was ſo nearly allied to his, that he could not be ſuppoſed to praiſe them as they deſerv'd without reflecting great part of the honour upon himſelf. But, my dear Felicia, this was not my real motive; I could not ſit by and ſee ſuch a charming reconciliation carried on, without deſiring, at leaſt, to have a ſmall ſhare in it. I had waited a good while to put in a word that might be of ſervice to you, but could not find a better opportunity than that which now offered.

WELL, thank you, my dear, replied I; but pray proceed. You might have told me that to-morrow. Come, make haſte. Your father, Miſs, continued ſhe, appear'd extremely delighted with what he heard; nor was he much leſs pleas'd to hear Lucius tell him that he had an eſtate (which though much leſs than yours, might ſerve to vindicate his giving him his daughter;) and indeed he was no ſooner inform'd of theſe particulars, than taking Lucius's hand, with an affectionate ſmile, he cried, Your virtue, Sir, has conquer'd. I admire your ſentiments, and approve Felicia's choice. I give you my daughter, and wiſh you both all imaginable happineſs. With a rapidity as quick as thought, he now threw

threw himſelf at my uncle's feet. He was unable to ſpeak; he graſp'd his hand, wetted it with tears, and I having waited for a minute for ſome fine extatic rapture, and perceiving him ſtill ſilent, flew to be the firſt meſſenger of this delightful news.

O! cried I aloud, ſure this is all a dream; am I—am I ſo happy? ſo very happy? where is my father? where is my Lucius? I will run and indulge my fondneſs for them both. Then, ſeeing my aunt laughing at my rapture, I flew into her arms, embraced her, and then Amelia. Come, continued I, let us go; I can't ſtay a moment. They humoured my impatience, and all of us ran together into the parlour. My father was ſtanding with his eyes affectionately fix'd on Lucius, who ſtood by him holding his hand, and I ſuppoſe giving a looſe to all the rapture of a tranſported heart; when breaking from him, my father flew to receive me with open arms. Come, my child, cried he, ſhare in my ſatisfaction —— I approve your choice. It ſhall now be this gentleman's ſtudy to render you happy. Here having embraced me with a tender affection, he took hold of my hand, when asking Lucius for his, he laid mine upon it, and then graſping both together, God bleſs you both,

my children, cried he, liſting up his eyes while the tears ſtole down his cheeks; God bleſs you both, and render your happineſs eternal. Do you, my ſon, remember, added he, (ſtill holding our hands, while he ſuffer'd Lucius to cloſe his upon mine, with a tender preſſure, which my father render'd yet more pleaſing, by holding both ours between his) remember that as by your virtue you now arrive at the height of your wiſhes, ſo only virtue will render your happineſs compleat and durable. Then turning to me, he proceeded, and do you, my Dear, remember, that now all your felicity in this life depends on your pleaſing Lucius. He is your own choice, and I command you, as you expect to be happy, never to mention, or by the leaſt action let him think, that you believe him obliged to you for the great addition that, by your means, is made to his fortune. God bleſs you both, my children! To this my aunt and Amelia gave a hearty Amen, when giving us an affectionate ſhake, he let go our hands, and Lucius embraced me with tranſport, while my aunt and couſin drew near to congratulate us on this happy occaſion. Their eyes ſparkled with joy, their faces glow'd with pleaſure, and every word and every look ſpoke the ſympathy between

their

their hearts and ours; wherever we turned our eyes, the ſoul of happineſs ſat beaming in every look, they beheld us with the tranſport Mr. Thompſon deſcribes, when he ſays,

" *'Twas friendſhip heighten'd by the mutual wiſh,*
" *Th' enchanting hope and ſympathetic glow,*
" *Struck from the charmful eye. Devoting each*
" *To love.*——

While my father ſtood looking on, which a ſuperior degree of conſcious pleaſure in his air,

" *Supremely happy in th' awaken'd power*
" *Of giving joy.*——

THE evening was ſpent with pleaſure and delight. Sophronia and Marilla were ſent for, and bore a part in our common ſatisfaction. And nothing then ſeemed wanting to render our felicity compleat. Yet I aſſure you, Madam, not all this delight could prevent my anticipating the pleaſure you would receive from this happy news, nor eraſe from my thoughts the remembrance of how much I am,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S
Moſt obliged Servant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XXII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHILE I was reading yours, every line of which expreſs'd the moſt generous and tender ſympathy in my diſtreſs, I could not help being extremely delighted with the thought, that you were perhaps the ſame moment engag'd in peruſing my laſt, where you would learn, that you might freely baniſh all your fears, ſince I muſt now appear greatly above your pity. It was a pleaſing reflection, Madam, and I aſſure you, I could not entertain myſelf with the ſatisfaction you would receive on this occaſion, without feeling a great encreaſe of my own. Sure nothing can be more natural than to ſhare in the joy we ourſelves occaſion, when ſelf-love and friendſhip both conſpire to aid the ſympathetic delight; and to reflect back the pleaſure another feels from our happineſs.

BUT what a ſtrange ſcheme! could any thing be more extravagant! to ſend all my letters to my father, to open his eyes to the perfections of my lover, and to convince him, as you ſay, from thoſe unguarded overflowings

of

of my heart, that our paſſion has been hitherto carried on with the ſtricteſt regard to virtue, and all the obligations of duty. Really it was an excellent artifice, to remove his prejudices; and for what I know, might have been attended with ſucceſs. I was preſent when my father received the parcel, and could not help being a witneſs of the ſurprize he diſcover'd at ſeeing a large bundle of letters encloſed; when having given me that directed for me, and read yours to himſelf; he call'd my aunt aſide, and ſmiling, retired with her to read their contents, while I was under little or no apprehenſions of the conſequence of having thoſe tender tranſcripts of my heart diſcover'd; for tho' I had entirely forgot the contents of moſt of my letters, a conſciouſneſs of the ſincerity of my duty kept my mind at eaſe, and would not ſuffer me to fear that I had wrote any thing that could poſſibly offend him. But I had no ſooner read yours, and indulg'd, for a conſiderable time, ſome of thoſe pleaſing thoughts due to friendſhip and you, than a ſudden reſtleſs impulſe of curioſity made me long to know what effect my letters had on thoſe intereſted perſons, my father and my aunt; I therefore aroſe, in order to attempt a diſcovery, which I had not patience to wait for, 'till they made it themſelves

ſelves. I found them in my aunt's cloſet, and the door not being lock'd, I gently puſh'd it a little open, and ſaw them both ſeated with their backs towards me, with the eſcrutore, before which they were ſetting, cover'd with papers. The good lady was liſtening to my father, who continued reading with a low voice, while ſhe look'd over him; but I had not ſtood a minute in this ſituation, when turning their heads ſo that I diſcovered half their faces, on which were imprinted ſome lively traces of ſatisfaction, they gave each other a glance, my father crying out at the ſame time, in a tranſport, O the dear girl! elated with this tender exclamation, I took a ſtep farther, and forgetting that I was only a kind of a ſpy, and ought therefore to be conceal'd, I puſh'd the door a little too rudely, which grating againſt the floor, they both ſtarted, and turning their eyes to the place from whence the noiſe proceeded, diſcovered me. I was now quite diſconcerted, and you may be ſure had an air not a little ridiculous; for my curioſity now appeared worthy of ſhame; and therefore caſting down my eyes, was at a loſs whether to go in, or retire; but before I could determine, my aunt put an end to my embaraſſment, by calling out, What, Felicia, is it you? I could be almoſt angry with

you,

you. We were reading your ſoul, it was talking to us; and here you, like a little impertinent, muſt come and interrupt the entertainment you yourſelf was giving us. At this I boldly entered the room, when they both joining in their careſſes, and I making ſome apologies, frankly confeſs'd the motive of my coming, and the effect my father's goodneſs had in making me unattentive to the neceſſary precautions of being conceal'd. They laugh'd at my ingenuity, and having, at their requeſt, brought them your letters, and plac'd them in the order I received them, I left them to their entertainment; and going down ſtairs took a walk with Amelia in the garden, where we for ſome time indulg'd the pleaſure of diſcourſing on each other's happineſs. We then made a compariſon between love and friendſhip, talk'd of you, and in ſhort, were very merry with your expedient for promoting my felicity.

O MADAM! when our minds, after a dreadful ſtorm that has threatened the wreck of all that is moſt dear and valuable, perceive themſelves entirely at eaſe, and wafted by the chearful gale of every pleaſing paſſion, we find new charms in all around us; a thouſand opening joys, that would otherwiſe paſs unheeded, break

break in upon our ſouls, and contribute to heighten our ſatisfaction; we have a quicker taſte for every new acceſſion of delight, and fill'd with that complacency which makes us look upon every thing with a ſmile, every object in return ſeems to ſmile upon us. And while we are in this ſituation, not only friendſhip and love wrap the mind in the moſt pure ethereal delights, but the glittering ſun-beams, the balmy breeze, the verdant groves, and all the laviſh bounty of nature give us a ſenſual pleaſure. O how ſweet are the delights which heaven has prepared for mortals! but how much more exquiſite are the charms of innocence and conſcious virtue, which give a pleaſing reliſh to all theſe natural beauties! Affliction and diſtreſs, in rankling care and all the painful, bitter guſh of grief, the darkſome ſhades of providence! like the clouds and ſtorms of nature, roaring round the high-rais'd mountain, and ecchoing with a horrid yell thro' all her diſtant caverns, ſerve to beautify the variegated ſcene, and heighten the glow of her returning ſmiles: our tears, "that rain of eyes," ſwell the humane bloſſom; the kindly ſhower cheriſhes the hidden ſeeds of virtue, opens the lovely foliage, and with the next returning ſun the freſh budding graces ſtand confeſs'd. But

to return from this long digreſſion, which I hope you will think not altogether impertinent.

AT dinner I had the pleaſure of Lucius's company, a happineſs I now enjoy every day; when I took notice that my father, who could not yet have read half my letters, behav'd with a peculiar complaiſance, and treated him with a reſpect I had never obſerved before; and indeed if his eſteem and affection for Lucius increaſes as it has done ſince our grand reconciliation, he may poſſibly be in greater haſte to compleat our union than I deſire he ſhould be; for between you and I, I begin to grow a coward, and am a little afraid of entering into the awful aukward ſtate, from whence, you know, as from the regions of death, there is no return. However, your example, and that of Amelia's, I don't doubt will give me the courage neceſſary to go through the ſolemn ceremony with a pretty good grace.———But I find my happineſs makes me grow lazy, and as I have nothing now very material to add, ſhall conclude,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

DEAR MADAM,

MY father's affection for Lucius is now ariſen to ſuch a height, that I hardly know whether he or I have the greater ſhare in his heart; they are become almoſt inſeparable, and are united in a friendſhip that appears very extraordinary in perſons between whom there is ſuch a wide difference with reſpect to age. He is perpetually at our houſe, and the company of the lover is pretty equally ſhared between the happy father and the ſtill more happy daughter. Methinks this indulgent parent is more laviſh of his careſſes to me than uſual, he is continually approving my choice, and giving me inſtructions to regulate my conduct by ſuch rules, as he ſays will render my felicity complete. He has read to me ſeveral Spectators on this ſubject, to which he has ſubjoined many obſervations that have fallen within his own notice. And I aſſure you, Madam, it ſhall be my care to put all his wiſe maxims in practice. To ſtudy our own happineſs, and that of thoſe we love is an affair of the utmoſt conſequence, nor can we take too much

much pains in the noble employment, which is at once both our duty, our honour, and the ſource of the moſt ſolid and laſting joys. My ſoul is too delicate, and my tenderneſs for the amiable Lucius too ſublime to ſuffer me to think without pain, on thoſe little jars, thoſe petty quarrels, which interupt the felicity of ſome of the moſt happy pairs, and ſometimes make breaches dreadfully fatal to their future repoſe. They are upon their guard as to things that ſeem of importance, but while their minds lie open to trifles, thoſe trifles ſoon become affairs of the utmoſt conſequence. To theſe little incidents we are continually expoſed, and therefore, as my father ſays, they are much more to be feared than thoſe, that at firſt view appear of the greateſt moment. However the task which he has inculcated cannot be very diſpleaſing, ſince all his rules are perfectly agreeable to my inclinations, and only conſiſt of ſuch maxims as muſt, if obſerved, perpetuate our mutual felicity. O my dear friend! tell me (for you know) if there can be greater pleaſure than that which reſults from the reflection of pleaſing a perſon dearer, infinitely dearer to us than our ſelves. The grateful look, the kindling glance, the expreſſive glow of tender fondneſs, ſilently ſhot

from

from the thankful eye ——— O can there be a greater reward, to ſoften the charming toil, if that can be call'd a toil that will gladden the heart we love? For this I will read and ſtudy to enrich my mind, for this I will dreſs, for this I will plot new arts to pleaſe, while virtue, innocence and truth ſhall lead the way, and mark my path to laſting bliſs. What delight the diſtant proſpect beams upon my ſoul! My Lucius! my husband! my friend! dear epithets! ——— enchanting ſounds! ——— ſounds ſwelling with every thrilling joy! ———O all gracious being! may my abilities be equal to the ardor of my ſoul! may the wife be loſt in the friend, the ſoft, the tender, the generous friend!

THESE laſt thoughts ariſe in my mind whenever I entertain myſelf with the grateful ſubject of my father's inſtructions: but the pleaſure I may be ſuppoſed to receive from theſe reſolutions is extremely damp'd by abundance of intruding fears that daſh my joys with a mixture of bitterneſs; I tremble leſt in the unguarded moments of my life, I ſhould drop the guard I reſolve to keep over my temper; leſt I ſhould forget to pleaſe, or loſe the power of doing it. Thoughts that are always attended with pain.

YOU ſee what a fond unfaſhionable creature I am grown; but as your ladyſhip has given me ſome reaſon to believe that you are not leſs weak than myſelf, I boldly brave your ſatire; ſo that if you make merry with me on this occaſion, I ſhall freely join in the laugh.

MY happineſs is now ſo great, that there ſeems nothing wanting but the conſideration of its being perpetual, to render it complete: Nor does Amelia's appear leſs exquiſite than mine; we are ſurrounded with every laughing delight, every ſocial endearment. The congratulations of our friends, the careſſes of our parents, the tenderneſs of our lovers, and the pleaſing ſympathy in each other's felicity, all contribute to heighten our joy; while rapture itſelf grows more pleaſing, by ſettling into a ſerene and moſt charming tranquility. Every thing is preparing for the ceremony that is to unite us for ever to the deareſt perſons on earth; and next Thurſday Amelia and I are to be hailed under the title of Brides, and initiated into the dignified ſtate of venerable Matrons. And between you and I, Madam, we both heartily wiſh theſe ſolemn doings over, for really they have ſomething terrible in them that frights at a diſtance.

THUS

THUS far, Madam, I had written yeſterday, at which time I had no other care than how to render Lucius and my ſelf as happy as poſſible, except ſome little intruding thoughts of the aukward appearance I ſhould make at church, and thoſe natural inquietudes which are apt to perplex the mind upon the view of an important change in our circumſtances, all which were counterbalanced by abundance of moſt charming reflections: but the ſcene ſoon chang'd. Alas! what is life, but a perpetual round of vexations and diſappointments! a rapid ſucceſſion of intermingled pleaſures and pains! theſe cares and theſe delightful thoughts ſoon vaniſhed, they gave place to other cares of a more bitter kind, unmix'd with the leaſt thought that could alleviate their force, or ſtill the tumult of my troubled mind.

YESTERDAY we had Mellifont's company as uſual. The time paſt away very agreeably, and tho' I had not ſeen Lucius all the preceding day, I felt little uneaſineſs on account of his abſence. I knew if he was ill I ſhould have heard from him, and therefore did not queſtion but he was detained by ſome extraordinary buſineſs, which would be no ſooner finiſhed than I ſhould ſee him again, with a ſatisfaction that would be greatly encreaſed by our being deprived

deprived for a ſhort time of each others company. Thus, while anticipating the eagerneſs with which I fancied he would fly to me, the pleaſure I ſhould obſerve in his countenance, and the tender apologies he would doubtleſs make on this occaſion, I recompenſed my ſelf for the loſs of a preſent gratification, with the pleaſing thoughts of the future. Though Mellifont, Amelia, and even my aunt could not help cenſuring him a little ſeverely, while I took his part with a good deal of vivacity, and let them know that I did not think I had the leaſt reaſon to be offended.

HOWEVER, in the evening, I had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing him enter the court; my heart bounded with joy, and a ſudden thrill of delight darted thro' every vein. He entered the room, he ſaluted me, but it was with ſuch a kind of cold reſtraint, as at once alarmed and pierc'd my ſoul; I knew not what to think, nor how to behave. I felt an emotion which I know not how to deſcribe, a painful flutter of ſpirits: when having made a ſhort apology, by ſaying he had been detained by ſome affairs of the utmoſt conſequence, he took his ſeat, and join'd in the converſation, with a diſtraction that was too viſible for me not to take particular notice of it, while methought he had an air of conſtraint

that

that ſeem'd quite unnatural to him. He avoided looking at me, and whenever his eyes chanced to meet mine, he ſuddenly caſt them down. O what could I think? could I imagine that he was grown perfidious, and that I had loſt my empire over his heart? No, I could not believe it: I could not entertain a thought ſo injurious to the fair idea I had conceived of his truth and goodneſs. However, all that engaging frankneſs which had hitherto appeared on his countenance was vaniſhed, and I was ignorant, of the cauſe. Some ſtrange event, thought I, muſt have happen'd, in which I am greatly intereſted. I was ready to imagine any thing rather than that Lucius, my dear dear Lucius, could be falſe.

AT laſt, Mellifont and Amelia leaving the room, my aunt ſoon followed, and we were left together, without the interruption of company; a ſituation which I had long'd for ever ſince I obſerv'd this reſtraint in his behaviour, though his coldneſs would not ſuffer me to take any meaſures to obtain this ſatisfaction. His eyes now ſoftened, while drooping with ſome ſecret care, every feature had an air of reluctant languiſhment. His tenderneſs had a mixture of fear, and compaſſion, and methought he even ſeem'd to dread my reproaches. We both continued ſilent,

his

his eyes were ſteadily fix'd on mine. A ſigh, a tear eſcap'd him. He held down his head to ſtifle his ſighs, to hide his tears. Oh how nearly did they touch me! what a violent emotion did they raiſe in my breaſt! my heart throbb'd——a pang of grief and ſoft ſurprize ſtruck thro' my ſoul. I long'd to know the cauſe of what I ſaw, yet dreaded to aſk it. When at laſt breaking ſilence, O my dear Lucius, cried I, unable to reſtrain my tears, tell me, for heaven's ſake, tell me what is the matter—What is it that diſturbs you?—I muſt know it. Have you a care that I have not a right to ſhare with you? Let me know what dreadful misfortune it is that gives you this pain. Indeed if I can, I will remove it. At this I ſigh'd and wiped my eyes, while he, with his ſtill fixed on the floor, echoed back my ſighs, when, as if ſtruggling to conquer the glut of ſorrow which choak'd up his voice, O my Felicia! my dear, my lovely Felicia! ſaid he, let me perſuade you to forget me; I will never involve you in the miſeries of our unhappy family. ——— What do you mean, cried I, haſtily interrupting him, and ſcarce able to believe my ears, I don't underſtand you——— Alas, my dear, rejoin'd he, in a ſorrowful tone, you can't be mine, I don't deſerve—How! interrupted

rupted I again, ſtunn'd at his words; but immediately my pride helping me to recollect my ſelf, I coldly rejoin'd, Well, Sir, juſt as you pleaſe.

HERE I was going to fling out of the room, when a ſudden glance, in a moment diſpell'd my indignation, while Love, with all its humbling powers took intire poſſeſſion of my ſoul. I ſaw him with his eyes greedily fix'd on me; they overflow'd with a melting ſoftneſs, and at the ſame time, ſparkling through the cryſtal ſwell, with awful dignity, ſeemed to expreſs ſome great, ſome hidden purpoſe. Every degree of confuſion was vaniſhed, not the leaſt tincture of ſhame remained. His countenance had an air of open frankneſs, and no other traces were viſible there but thoſe of perfect tenderneſs and ſoft regret. What could I now think? or what could I ſay? I perceiv'd that there was ſome extraordinary cauſe that forc'd him to behave in this manner; I perceived (or at leaſt I thought I did) that it was with reluctance he ſtruggled againſt his love, and endeavoured to forget me; yet I flatter'd my ſelf, that if I did but know the motive to this painful task, I ſhould be able to give him ſome relief, and perhaps let him ſee, that there was no occaſion for ſuch a victory over his paſſion:

yet

yet, however glad I ſhould have been to have heard his reaſons, I had ſtill too much pride to ſuffer me to enquire into them; the ſhame of meanly ſtooping to deſire to be inform'd of theſe particulars ſhock'd me immediately; I ſaw plainly, that this would appear too forward, and too evidently expreſs the difficulty I ſhould have to overcome my tenderneſs.

THESE reflections, which glanced through my mind in a moment, kept me ſilent, and prevented my asking to be inform'd of what I impatiently long'd to hear; when finding me ſtill continue ſpeechleſs, You wonder, my Dear, ſaid Lucius, and are at a loſs to find arguments to excuſe my behaviour, but could I prefer my own happineſs to yours, I might ſtill be as bleſt as I could wiſh; as bleſt as the moſt high wrought imagination can conceive: I might barbarouſly conſult my own felicity to the prejudice of your happineſs and future peace of mind. But I love you more dearly than life, and therefore can never conſent to involve you in my misfortunes. I will never be guilty of ſuch baſeneſs. Oh my dear Felicia! call not this a want of affection; rather think it the triumph of the moſt perfect love, the ſtrongeſt proof of the moſt generous, diſintereſted tenderneſs —— But what will

this coſt me? —— In loſing you, I abandon every earthly joy ——— I bid adieu to the moſt pleaſing proſpects, to the enchanting ſweets of the moſt pure and virtuous——To ſee you no more! ——.

AT this moment my aunt's return put a ſtop to this moving diſcourſe; when Lucius and I endeavouring to compoſe our countenances, he enquired if my father would return that evening (for he had been out all day) and being told he would, he promiſed to come the next morning early, to pay him his reſpects, and immediately left us.

IN this ſituation I am in at preſent, I form a thouſand conjectures, each of which perhaps is groundleſs; and notwithſtanding all my endeavours to penetrate the cauſe of this ſudden change, am as much in the dark as ever. However, I muſt believe him ſincere, and therefore can't ſuſpect that he wants a pretence to break his engagements: No, I am ſure he tenderly loves me— It would be criminal to doubt it. But a few hours more will now diſcover the whole affair, 'till when at leaſt I ſhall be,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

Moſt unhappy Friend,

FELICIA.

P. S.

P. S. The uneaſy torment of ſuſpenſe, not allowing me to ſleep, I could not think of any expedient to paſs away the tedious interval 'till Lucius's return, ſo agreeably as in opening my heart to you: I therefore aroſe two hours before the reſt of the family, and employ'd my time in writing you the above.

LETTER XXIV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I NOW ſend you two letters together, the dates of which will tell you in what order they are to be read. In the firſt you find me plunged into freſh anxiety, into all the pains of diſappointed love. In this you will ſee the cauſe of this mighty change, a great mind ſtruggling between love and generoſity.

ABOUT an hour after I had concluded the other letter, a ſervant came to tell me that breakfaſt was ready. I went down with a mind extremely perplexed, when in ſpite of all my endeavours to aſſume an air of eaſe and gaiety, they perceived my diſorder, but inſtead of

enquiring into the reaſon of it, as I expected, only ſtrove to divert my penſive thoughtfulneſs, by turning it into ridicule. At laſt however, Lucius appeared, and by his preſence put an end to their unſeaſonable mirth, which began to grow extremely painful. Breakfaſt was now over, and the dear youth deſiring my father and I to favour him with our company, went with us into a room, where we had no reaſon to fear being diſturbed; and having taken our ſeats, with eyes in which were intermingled an air of dignity with the ſoft languiſhment of love, he caſt a glance at me, and then fixing them on my father, Sir, cried he, I am now come to thank you for your unmerited goodneſs, and by an ingenuous confeſſion of my circumſtances to let you ſee, that I am unworthy of the happineſs of poſſeſſing your daughter. Nay, Sir, continued he, ſeeing him look aſtoniſhed, I don't wonder at your being ſtartled at an addreſs of this nature, but ſince I cannot now marry her with honour, I muſt do you and her the juſtice to decline it.

STRUCK dumb with ſurprize, my father at firſt ſeem'd incapable of making a reply; he riveted his eyes upon Lucius, who at the ſame time caſt his to the floor; his colour came

and

and went, he knit his brows, while his countenance expreſs'd a confuſed mixture of vexation, anger and diſappointment; when, at laſt, ſeeming to collect his ſcatter'd thoughts, What can this mean? cried he, I deſire you would explain yourſelf. What diſadvantage can there be in your circumſtances that you ought not to have mentioned before? It was a baſe and ungenerous part to endeavour to engage my daughter's affections, and thus to carry things to the laſt extremity, when you knew you could not marry her with honour; and I don't doubt but ſhe will reſent ſuch treatment as ſhe ought. She will regard your conduct as an inſult to humanity, and as an affront that deſerves only to be anſwer'd with contempt.

THO' this was expreſs'd with all the bitterneſs of reſentment, in his voice and air, yet it appear'd to make but little impreſſion on Lucius; only a modeſt, guiltleſs bluſh flaſh'd in his cheek, which ſeem'd to ariſe from the indignant pride of injur'd innocence; when finding that my father, by his ſilence, waited for his anſwer, I am ſorry, Sir, ſaid he, in a bold and manly tone, to find you entertain ſo ill an opinion of me; but were I that ungrateful wretch you now think me, I ſhould deſerve even greater reproaches than thoſe you

are pleaſed to load me with; Felicia's merit would then juſtify this warmth in an indulgent father; but I beg you would do me the juſtice to hear me, and I don't doubt but that, notwithſtanding I may appear a more unequal match than ever, you will ſtill think I deſerve a place in your eſteem. My misfortunes call for pity, and not reſentment. I have choſen to be unhappy rather than to ſee my father expoſed to the miſeries of a priſon. I have loſt Felicia to ſave my father!———Think, Sir, what a ſon muſt feel at the very thought of ſeeing a perſon whom nature, whom ten thouſand obligations has bound him to love and revere, in a jail, in a dark unwholeſome priſon, excluded from the chearful face of man, lingering out a wretched being in penury, while he enjoyed———Oh! it is too much; affluence in ſuch a circumſtance, would be a curſe, while nature would extinguiſh all the delight of love, and imbitter its moſt pleaſing ſweets.—'Tis true, I might have conceal'd my giving up my fortune to procure his liberty.—I *might* have done it—and had I been baſe enough to injure your goodneſs, I *had* done it. I might in this caſe, have confided in the generoſity of Felicia's mind, who after our union, might have excuſed my deceiving her, and have kept

it

it a ſecret. But I could neither reſolve to marry her in ſuch wretched circumſtances, nor to impoſe upon you. I had yeſterday morning five thouſand pounds, I have now but two, a miſerable pittance to ſupport the exigence of a family, born above the inconveniences of a low life! for to this uſe it muſt be applied: Alas, what inconveniences ſhall we labour under! but what are theſe inconveniences to the ten thouſand times more painful ſhock of the rich man's ſcorn, the indignant leer, the contemptuous taunts and ſhrugs of the wealthy fool, the dread of needy creditors! theſe, even at a diſtance, ſtrike terror through the ſoul, and damp the generous pride of upright virtue. But is a wretch like this a proper match for the lovely, the wealthy Felicia? No, you cannot, and I ought not to think it. Inſtead of an eſtate, ſhall I bring her the neceſſities of an unhappy family? forbid it heaven! forbid it love! Can I in theſe circumſtances ungratefully impoſe on that generoſity that made you overlook the diſparity of our fortunes, which was too great before? No, no, Sir; you muſt no longer think of me as your ſon, nor I of her as the dear companion of my life. The conſciouſneſs of having now done my duty, in reſigning all my pretenſions, will help

me to ſupport her loſs——I already feel it will——Do you then teach her to forget me. Tho' I ſhall ſee her no more, ſhe ſhall have my prayers, and all my fondeſt wiſhes—Good God! whatever I ſuffer, may Felicia at leaſt be happy!——

O! MADAM, had you but ſeen with what a flood of paſſion this ſpeech was utter'd, you would —— I am ſure you would have been extremely moved. He wept——and ſure never did tears look ſo graceful on a manly cheek before! My father wept too, and I faſter than them both, while he purſued without interruption the noble dictates of his generous heart, burſting into the incoherent language of tender diſtreſs. But I muſt be more particular, with reſpect to my father, for Lucius had hardly began this apology when the reſentment which reddened in his cheek began inſenſibly to vaniſh; his features, before ſwell'd with indignation, now ſunk imperceptibly, and left only the ſoft traces of pity, blended with a wonder that ſeem'd to ariſe amidſt thoſe generous ſentiments, which elevate the ſoul above it ſelf. He appeared intereſted in every word the dear engaging youth uttered; nor did the broken ſighs which frequently di-jointed them, the groan of his throbbing heart, the trembling

trembling accent of his voice, or the leaſt change in his countenance, ſeem to eſcape his notice. I ſaw it did not——with a ſecret joy I ſaw it; and rejoiced in the humanity of his heart, which made him pity the noble diſtreſs of my lover——at this moment more dear than ever. Never did the high-wrought images of even a fictitious tale preſent a ſcene ſo moving as this would have been to an indifferent ſpectator; the moſt inſenſible breaſt muſt ſure have melted into ſoftneſs, the dryeſt eye have guſh'd into tears.

AFTER Lucius had finiſh'd, there remain'd a ſilence which laſted near a minute——an awful, tender ſilence, which was only interrupted by a few heaving ſighs; when at laſt my father ſmiling, with an expreſſive affection in his look, Indeed, Sir, ſaid he, I have been too haſty; you deſerve to be pitied: but what ſtrange magic do you find to ſoften me thus? I profeſs I have not ſhed ſo many tears theſe eighteen years; never ſince I loſt Felicia's mother, my dear Elmira. But I beg you would do me the favour, my friend, added he, to give me the particulars of this affecting ſtory.

OH! Sir, reſumed my dear Lucius, you have a right to demand every thing from me: and tho' no mercenary view can tempt me,

to betray Felicia into ruin, tho' I have not the leaſt diſtant hope of ever obtaining her by this confeſſion, which can have no other effect than to convince you that heaven never deſign'd her for me, the reſpect I owe you, and the deſire I have to appear ſtill worthy of your friendſhip, will make me give you all the ſatisfaction you can deſire. Two days ago, as I was preparing to pay this lovely maid a viſit, a meſſenger from my father (who went out pretty early that morning) brought me a note, by which I was informed that he was under an arreſt from one of his principal creditors. What could I do, but inſtantly fly to him! I found him in the houſe of one of our dependants, with no other company than the officers, who deprived him of his liberty. He received me with an air of dejected ſadneſs, while his attendants ſtepping to the door, left me at liberty to indulge the torturing anguiſh of my heart, by endeavouring to give him the comfort I wanted my ſelf. Oh Lucius! ſaid he ſeeing me enter, you ſee your father a priſoner! This was all he could ſay, before I ſprung into his arms. I could not ſpeak to him; we both ſeated ourſelves on a bench near the table, when having caſt his eyes upon me again, with an air of the deepeſt melancholy and diſtreſs, he gave me a particular

account

account of the ſituation of his affairs; an account that fill'd my mind with diſtractions, yet in a great meaſure put a ſtop to that torturing hurry, that flutter of ſpirits with which I had before caſt about my thoughts, to give him relief; ſince I was now ſenſible that there was but one way to ſave him, and that at firſt view gave the moſt violent ſhock to my ſoul. Oh! Sir, how hard——how intolerably hard it is to root out of the heart a paſſion like mine! You, Madam, continued he, looking at me, appear'd in that moment more charming than ever —— ten thouſand pleaſing, diſtracting ideas crowded upon my mind, and overwhelmed my ſenſes in a mazy whirl of bitter giddineſs. My reaſon ſeemed departing, while my breaſt was torn between love and nature, between duty and the tender——too tender ſoftneſs that melts, and charms, and ſwallows up the ſoul. Good God! what did I feel! the ſigh, the tear, the unkind reproach from my dear Felicia, and all the diſtraction of her boſom was felt with a double emphaſis in mine; but I ſoon came to a reſolution; the manner in which my father concluded the painful ſtory of the ſituation of his affairs, fix'd my wavering thoughts, call'd in my reaſon, and pleaded in his look, his air, his words, ſo ſtrongly for

duty,

duty, that it was almoſt impoſſible to reſiſt its impulſes. Oh Lucius! ſaid he, in a moſt diſtreſsful tone, You ſee I can have no proſpect of relief——No; I have not the leaſt hope——the leaſt glimmering hope of ever procuring my liberty. Here preſſing my hand, and giving me a look painfully affectionate, 'tis a melancholy thought continued he, the dreary horrors of a priſon are extremely ſhocking; they diſarm my reſolutions, and make a coward of me! But I have no body to reproach but myſelf.——To be buried alive, to be for ever deprived of that wholeſome air, which the meaneſt ſlaves breathe at liberty——Nay, don't look ſo tenderly upon me! continued he, preſſing my hand again, and then looking at me, with the utmoſt exceſs of paternal affection, he added, Will you not come to ſee me?—I could bear no more: theſe laſt words pierced thro' my ſoul. Don't, pray don't, Sir, diſtract me with theſe dreadful thoughts, interrupted I, you ſhall not go to priſon —— I am reſolved you ſhan't. What do you mean? return'd he, I muſt, I have no friend to aſſiſt me. What am I then? cried I; you ſhall not, if my life or fortune can prevent it. I will not—I cannot ſee you ſo wretched! Mention it no more, returned he, I won't hear of ſuch

a propoſal. Your whole fortune would ſcarcely be ſufficient—No, no; you ſhan't ruin your ſelf for me. I will not purchaſe my liberty at ſo dear a price as your happineſs. Think what it is you propoſe. Think of Felicia. Ah! that name will ſurely call you back to reaſon; you need but conſult your own heart to find that it is ſhe, not I, that muſt render you happy. Leave me then to the miſeries I have brought upon myſelf. Death will ſoon put an end to them all; but oh! how painful is this ſituation, in which death, ſo terrible to nature, is my only relief!———A relief do I call it?—would it be a relief to me? No, I fear not, there is ſomething after death, more dreadful than death itſelf,———more terrible than all I ſuffer. O how happy is the virtuous man to whom the grim monſter appears with an angel's face—with the ſmiles of immortal beauty! To me it is covered with a dreary gloom that ſhoots terror through my ſoul! But when you are happy, Lucius, think of me; viſit me in my grave———my priſon. Oh my father, my dear dear father! cried I, interrupting him again, Why will you not hear me? why do you give way to ſuch cruel thoughts? ſhall I not have the liberty of diſpoſing of my own? I have already thought of what

what I loſe in forſaking the gentle Felicia. I know my felicity is interwoven with hers. I know that our marriage, on which the happineſs of my life depends, will never be concluded, yet I have made my choice. There is ſomething ſo horrible in the apprehenſions of ſeeing you a priſoner, that I cannot bear to think of it. There are no circumſtances, in which ſuch a misfortune to you would not render me wretched. Are you not my father, and ſhall not nature plead for you? Do you think me a ſon, and yet believe me capable of ſtruggling againſt my duty?—my duty to my father?——a father from whom I have received numberleſs obligations, that call for returns of gratitude and love. Think what my mother will feel, when ſhe hears of your diſtreſs, and tho' I have not the power to ſhake your reſolutions, by my entreaties to accept of what I offer you, let her tears, let her deſpair touch your heart. Marilla too will be diſtracted with grief, and I know her ſo well that were ſhe of age ſhe would gladly make you the ſame offer that I do now. Indeed, Sir, we can none of us feel more miſery than in ſeeing you miſerable ——— Good God! cried my father, with uplifted hands, teach me how to act. Never did my conduct, in my

calmeſt

calmeſt intervals of reflection appear ſo black as it does now. Oh! Lucius! I am aſhamed of thinking how I have injur'd you. Your kindneſs is more inſupportable than all my ſufferings —— How ſeverely does all this goodneſs reproach me ——— this undeſerv'd goodneſs. It touches me to the quick———it makes a monſter of me———I beg pardon, Sir, replied I, if I have done any thing to occaſion theſe cruel reflections. In ſerving you I only do my duty.——— But ah! it is a painful duty, interrupted he, I know it is, your fortune is your ſmalleſt loſs. If I accept of it, I deprive you of Felicia's fortune too — and what is infinitely worſe to a mind like yours, I deprive you of Felicia! I might have given you a ſplendid eſtate, but inſtead of that to — Oh! how unlike a father, who, inſtead of a curſe, ought to be a bleſſing to his family! My conduct has been an outrage againſt nature ——— a violation of the deareſt privileges of a parent— I have forgot the obligations of the husband, the father, and the friend.—Thy mother too!— How miſerable have I made her! I have been the ruin of all who have loved me—The ruin of my wife and children—the ruin of thee!———ſad effect of vice! how dearly do I pay for my folly and madneſs!

HERE he pauſed, and I dare ſay, it is not difficult, Madam, for you to imagine the tender, the generous, the noble ſentiments, the relation of this affecting conteſt produced. Methought there was ſomething ſo heroic, ſo dutiful, and ſo diſintereſted in this part of his behaviour, that I could not help ſecretly applauding him. But now my father let me ſee that he was of the ſame opinion as myſelf, by openly diſcovering his ſentiments: for Lucius no ſooner gave him leave to ſpeak, by a pauſe in which he ſeemed to recollect himſelf; than my father, as if eager to put him out of his pain, took hold of his hand, and giving it an affectionate ſhake, Generous youth, cried he, this was noble done——You are more my ſon than ever. I ſhall think myſelf happy in being allied to a perſon of ſuch worth. How greatly do theſe tears become you! this ſoft adoption of another's ſorrow, this exceſs of humanity, which the ſavage mind cannot (or at leaſt will not) feel, is the trueſt mark to know the brave, the generous heart by. Actions like theſe give a perfect inſight into characters, and while they add a dignity to the higheſt ſtations, they ſpread a luſtre that can never be equall'd by all the pride of wealth, the pomp of titles, or the falſe glitter of ſucceſsful ambition.

ambition. Dear Lucius! how happy will my daughter be in ſo worthy a husband!

THIS was utter'd in that peculiar tone in which we always expreſs ourſelves, when the full heart, burthened under its joy, breaks forth into an unreſtrained tranſport, into elevated ſurpriſe and generous affection. While he ſpoke the tears ſtarted afreſh into his eyes, and added an endearing tenderneſs to the ſmile of gladneſs, which enlivened his countenance. His ſoul beam'd in his looks, and diſcovered a mind ſoftened, delighted, and rais'd above itſelf; while I dwelt upon each word he uttered, and with a moſt charming extaſy aſſented to the juſtice of his praiſes. As to Lucius, he ſeem'd all this while as if awaking from a troubleſome dream, while ſurpriſe, gratitude, and a modeſt joy, diſperſed the clouds of deſpair, which hung on his brow. He look'd at my father, he look'd at me; the ſame paſſions were viſible in both our faces, only I fancy mine had an air of greater ſoftneſs; he then turn'd his eyes again to my father, and preſſing his hand, I am amaz'd, Sir, cried he, What can this goodneſs mean? can you really propoſe to marry Felicia to a perſon without a fortune? to one ſunk into indigence? ſure it is impoſſible! have you forgot that our family depends

depends upon my ſupport, and can you reſolve that Felicia's eſtate, inſtead of being augmented by her marriage, ſhould be applied to remove foreign cares, and foreign wants?

COME, come, Lucius, returned my father ſmiling, don't exaggerate the diſadvantages of your circumſtances. This laſt inſtance of filial piety ſhews a greatneſs of ſoul, that not only fills me with ſurpriſe, but extremely endears you to me. The better I know you, the more I admire your virtues; and to be as little behind you as poſſible, in point of generoſity, I promiſe not only to conſult your felicity, but the happineſs of all that are dear to you. But pray proceed; for I long to know the concluſion of theſe affecting incidents.

DEAR Sir, cried the engaging youth, (with a ſparkling joy ſwelling into rapture) dear Sir, teach me how to acknowledge your goodneſs; I would be grateful, but yet cannot expreſs my gratitude. My heart feels it all; feels it too ſenſibly to be expreſs'd. O my dear, my lovely Felicia, cried he, ariſing haſtily, running to me and giving me an eager affectionate embrace, while my father could not forbear laughing at this natural tranſport, this ſudden impulſe of affection, nor could I help being extremely delighted with it; with extaſy he

preſſed

preſſed my hand to his boſom, his eyes ſpoke unutterable things. But having indulg'd for near a minute this ſudden tranſport of joy, he returned to his chair, and concluded the ſtory of his father's misfortunes; but he neither ſufficiently enter'd into the ſubject, nor dwelt as before upon the moſt melting circumſtances. His own paſt ſorrow and his father's were ſwallow'd up by the joy of the preſent moment. He told us, that after many arguments, his father at laſt conſented to his propoſal, but not without the ſevereſt reproaches upon the madneſs of his own conduct. His creditors were ſent for, when offering a handſome compoſition, which was readily accepted, their affairs were concluded the next day; and in ſhort, that his misfortune, with the tenderneſs of Sophronia and Marilla, had wrought the moſt happy change in his conduct; a circumſtance which, as it gave Lucius the higheſt pleaſure, he mentioned with peculiar ſatisfaction.

As ſoon as he had done, my father renew'd the friendly proofs he had given him of his affection, and promiſed to uſe his endeavours to make us as happy as poſſible; ſo that before dinner, we were more firmly united than ever. What a delightful change in our affairs! In two days more

more my circumſtances and manner of life will be changed, ſo that when I write next, you will find me in a different claſs of mortals; but in whatever ſtate I am in, if you do me juſtice, you will believe me to be

Unalterably yours,

FELICIA.

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